

Question of Privilege

This morning it was discovered that there had been some disturbance in the Memorial Chamber—

Mr. Winch: Disturbance? May I send you over what I picked up?

Mr. McIlraith:—some disturbance in the Memorial Chamber of the Peace Tower.

Mr. Diefenbaker: What does the minister mean by disturbance?

Mr. McIlraith: I shall explain that in a moment. Immediately the appropriate authorities were called in, the appropriate engineer in the building and engineers from the Department of Public Works. When the structural engineer and mechanical engineer from the department arrived on the scene they discovered that the material that had been displaced could not be found, nor could it be obtained from the cleaning staff—

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Winch: How come I was able to find it in the Memorial Chamber?

Mr. McIlraith:—nor could it be obtained from the cleaning staff who first discovered the disturbance when they were cleaning the chamber in the ordinary course. The engineers have been searching for this material. I am now glad to have it so it can be inspected thoroughly. It would be wrong for me to attempt to assess the damage at the moment and say whether or not it is of any significance, until we have the engineers' report. The structural and mechanical engineers are now on the job inspecting this in a thorough way.

I should explain that the blasting is being done by a very well known firm of contractors, under the supervision of a firm of consulting engineers. Additionally, because of the nature of the work and its proximity to the parliament buildings, this firm has retained an engineer specializing in explosives work. The whole matter is being thoroughly checked. So far there is nothing that would lead me to indicate anything that would in any way alarm members. As I say, in a matter of this nature it is improper to give any advance opinion, but so far there is nothing which would indicate cause for alarm.

Mr. Diefenbaker: The minister was going to explain what the disturbance is. Is it a disturbance brought about through reverberations from the explosion or from some extramural activity? What is the disturbance?

[Mr. McIlraith.]

Mr. McIlraith: The evidence of disturbance is that there was an abnormal amount of dust, what a layman would describe as plaster dust, which appeared to come from the ornamental work in the stone forming the design at the base of the window. This is what it would appear to be, but at this time I do not wish to say whether it is of any real significance. Now that we have the material the engineers will have an opportunity to determine whether it involves something more than plaster.

Mr. Winch: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order, the hon. minister said it was dust. The samples I have given him, and which I personally picked up this morning, are not dust; they are broken material $\frac{3}{8}$ inch thick.

Mr. Lloyd R. Crouse (Queens-Lunenburg): Mr. Speaker, on the matter which has been raised I should like to direct a brief question to the Minister of Public Works. Prior to starting this type of construction was any consideration given to laying the pipe along the surface of the ground, properly insulating it, and then covering it with fill?

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Crouse: This would have been cheaper, and in view of the elevation of the ground in front it would have been satisfactory.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I am wondering whether the house now wishes to become involved in a debate on this subject. The hon. member rose on what he suggested was a question of privilege, or a grievance, and I considered that the house gave its consent to hear his statement and then to hear the statement of the Minister of Public Works. Perhaps the question raised by the hon. member now might properly be raised later on questions, and we might now revert to motions.

SUPREME COURT ACT**AMENDMENT RESPECTING OUTSIDE
ACTIVITIES OF JUDGES**

Hon. R. A. Bell (Carleton) moved for leave to introduce Bill No. C-237, to amend the Supreme Court Act.

He said: Mr. Speaker, the purpose of this bill is two-fold; first, to prohibit any justice of the Supreme Court of Canada from acting as a commissioner under the Inquiries Act; and, second, to prevent any such justice from undertaking any other service, unrelated to his judicial duties, as a result of which he might become involved in political controversy.

Motion agreed to and bill read the first time.