

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Tuesday, February 27, 1968

The house met at 2.30 p.m.

[Translation]

PRIVILEGE

MR. CAOUCETTE—NEWSPAPER CRITICISM
OF PARTY POSITION

Mr. Réal Caouette (Villeneuve): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a question of privilege.

I have been since last Thursday, and still am, a butt for virulent insinuations on the part of unscrupulous journalists, both French and English-speaking, who criticize the stand we took Wednesday with regard to the motion now before the house.

Mr. Speaker, I am accused of having made a bargain with the government. People wonder what happened between Monday and Wednesday to bring about a change in attitude on the part of the leader of the Ralliement des Créditistes and his group. Mr. Speaker, I will answer that what happened between Monday and Wednesday is simply that the motion now under consideration was introduced in the house, and that is all.

When, in the newspaper *Le Devoir*, Mr. Claude Ryan states that I met with the Minister of Manpower and Immigration (Mr. Marchand) and the Secretary of State for External Affairs (Mr. Martin), he is lying baldly and dishonestly. The same is true for the other journalists who wrote the same thing. I exchanged only a few words with the Secretary of State for External Affairs who asked me if we were opposed to the motion being discussed immediately after its introduction on Wednesday, disregarding the 48-hour notice required by the rules of the house. That was the only thing discussed by the Secretary of State for External Affairs and myself. At that time, I gave my word to the effect that we did not see any objection to the motion being discussed last Wednesday.

Therefore, newspapermen or members of other parties who attribute us bad intentions are acting dishonestly and I must say emphatically that our position has not been the object of any bargaining. Moreover, to those who asked the Prime Minister (Mr.

Pearson) whether he had offered to make me a senator I could have said: There are eight vacancies in the other place; we are eight members of the Ralliement Créditiste, and we are quite willing to fill those vacancies. But that was not the case.

To those who asked me whether the Prime Minister had offered me trips at the expense of the state, I must reply that I can travel abroad without my emoluments as member of parliament and without the intervention of any government.

So, I want to protest strongly against such dishonest and malevolent insinuations made by the press. May I add, Mr. Speaker, that my reputation, my integrity and my honesty are comparable to those of all the people who are now writing against me.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

[English]

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. I have received notice of a second question of privilege from the hon. member for Winnipeg South Centre.

MR. CHURCHILL—ANNOUNCEMENT OF
CHANGE IN PARTY AFFILIATION

Hon. Gordon Churchill (Winnipeg South Centre): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a question of personal privilege to announce that it is my intention to sit in the house as an independent Conservative.

I am taking this step after careful and long consideration, and with deep regret. The issue before the house is so fundamental to our parliamentary system and so dangerous to our freedom that I cannot justify to my conscience to surrender now of part of our freedom in the hope that it may be regained at some uncertain time in the future. That runs counter to my experience of life and to my understanding of mankind's long and painful struggle for freedom. The decision of the Progressive Conservative party to capitulate at this time is so contrary to the principles of the party, as I understand them, that I prefer to have complete freedom to express my views in the debate without embarrassment to my colleagues.