

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Wednesday, February 21, 1962

The house met at 2.30 p.m.

PRIVILEGE

MR. ARGUE—ANNOUNCEMENT OF RESIGNATION
FROM NEW DEMOCRATIC PARTY

Mr. Hazen Argue (Assiniboia): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a question of privilege affecting the house and my position in the house. I rise to inform the house that I have severed all my connections with the New Democratic party and, as a consequence, yesterday requested Your Honour to change the location of my seat.

My decision made at Regina to the Assiniboia N.D.P. executive was taken only after much careful and heart searching thought. The most difficult part of this decision was the realization that it meant leaving a group of men who had become very close to me, and who had worked and co-operated with one another for a period of almost four years. I leave eight hard working, sincere members of parliament who have served their country and their constituencies with distinction, and whose devotion to duty is an example to the whole house.

The second great difficulty in the decision I was making was that it was bound to hurt many good people of independent thought who had been my close friends within the C.C.F. These were the people who day after day, often at great sacrifice, went about trying to build a new party based on social justice and economic equality, and with the basis of control in the constituency organization. The consequence to them of my action I profoundly regret. In its justification I can only respond that the integrity of the Canadian nation, in my judgment, required me to make this decision.

I have already stated that in my opinion the N.D.P. was in the control of a small labour clique, and that their hold on the party was sure to continue and strengthen with the affiliation of more union locals. With delegates representing trade union locals and other labour bodies predominating over constituency delegates at conventions, discussion and persuasion on the convention floor becomes superfluous and votes become exercises merely to rubber stamp previously agreed to platform directives. It would be most dangerous to the democratic process to have a party gain power,

the effective control of which resided in a handful of labour leaders situated outside the House of Commons. This was the impelling reason why I have left the N.D.P.

As to the future, I shall merely say that I desire to seek re-election to parliament in my own riding of Assiniboia, and that I expect to make a further announcement bearing on my political future at an early date.

Mr. Speaker, I thank the house for its kind indulgence.

Mr. D. M. Fisher (Port Arthur): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a question of privilege in relation to the hon. member's statement.

Mr. Speaker: If it is a question of privilege affecting the hon. member individually, perhaps it would be in order for him to indicate what it is, but unless it is a matter of individual privilege or the privilege of the house I think the subject matter of the statement just made is probably one for debate. I point out to the hon. member that in the past similar statements of privilege have been made and precedent has been not to comment. However, if the hon. member has a point which he feels it raises—

Mr. Fisher: Mr. Speaker, I had no intention of rising and getting into the refrain of "Will ye no come back again" or anything like that, but I did feel that as a consequence of what the hon. member has said he has opened the way for a statement on this matter because there has been a reflection upon the other members of this party. As a consequence I just want to say that I do not intend to make the statement here, but it will be made tomorrow in the debate on the speech from the throne.

CRIMINAL CODE

AMENDMENT TO CHANGE METHOD OF EXECUTION

Miss Judy V. LaMarsh (Niagara Falls) moved for leave to introduce Bill No. C-69, to amend the Criminal Code (capital punishment, form of sentence).

Some hon. Members: Explain.

Miss LaMarsh: Mr. Speaker, the bill is a very short one consisting of one section. It is simply to provide a change of sentence upon someone found guilty of a capital crime