

members of this House will see that this is not an isolated case, it is a small case, in reality, as far as the amount is concerned, but that system is general in the shipyards at Sorel. It is a general system, but it is time that it should stop and we certainly will not be stopping it by commending the sitting member for the district for his actions in this case. I, therefore, beg to move:

That the said report be not adopted but that this House adopt, in lieu thereof, the draft report suggested by the minority of said Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections, as the same appears of record on the minutes of said committee marked 'B.'

Sir ALLEN AYLESWORTH (Minister of Justice). There is one point with regard to this case, in respect to which probably there will be no difference of opinion in this House, but I am afraid that there is likely not more than that one feature of which that could be said. I think we are all agreed that the matter now under consideration is one of very great importance, and I only wish that it were possible that we could all look at it as one which ought to be decided and which might be decided without any reference to political feeling. The charges which have been made here and which this House now has to decide are charges which affect not only the seat in this House of one of our members, but also affect that man's personal reputation and personal honour; he is literally on trial here before his peers. The independence of parliament has always been and has properly been a subject in regard to which the House of Commons in England as well as in this country has been peculiarly jealous, and the privileges of a member of parliament are privileges which ought to have and I am sure will receive at our hands, as members of the House of Commons, the most careful and anxious consideration. Any man who has the honour of being chosen by his fellow electors as their representative in this House is entitled surely, at the hands of his fellow members in this House, before any doubt even is cast upon his right to be a member of this House, to a careful trial and an honest consideration of the circumstances and the facts upon which it is proposed that he should be condemned. In what I have to say in reference to this matter I certainly set before myself in all honesty the effort to avoid being prejudiced in favour of the hon. gentleman against whom these charges are made, because of the circumstance that he is a political supporter as well as a personal friend. I want to try and I intend to try to discharge absolutely from my own consideration of the evidence which is here presented the fact that during the few years I have known the member for Richelieu (Mr. Lanctot) I

Mr. MONK.

have formed a personal affection for him, that I have in him an intimate friend for whom I have the highest regard and esteem. I submit to you that considerations of that character ought to be discarded in the decision of a matter of this sort, and I hope to be able to do so while confessing, as I have confessed before in this House, that I consider myself as strong and as partisan in my political feeling as any other member of this assembly. But while I say that I think I have plenty of companions in that regard. And, if hon. gentlemen would but confess—they only deceive themselves if they think they are not every bit as partisan in the strength of their political feeling as I unhesitatingly acknowledge myself to be.

There is another view of this matter; while one should try, and while I shall certainly endeavour my utmost to keep out of view any question of my own personal feelings toward the member for Richelieu, there is something in regard to his course in this matter which is entitled to have taken into consideration by us in coming to any conclusion. A man's character is his most valuable possession; it is that which he earns by the course of conduct which he pursues during his lifetime, and if any of us are acquainted as a matter of personal knowledge with the character of the hon. gentleman whose seat is in question upon this occasion, I think we are entitled to weigh his action in the light of that character which we know him to possess, whether it be for good or for evil, if any one knows of him matters in regard to which his course of action in this affair would very probably be influenced, that is a consideration which he is entitled to apply to the determination of the facts which are in issue now. And another thing that we are entitled to look upon is the behaviour of the hon. gentleman since these charges were made against him in this House. Every one knows that it is the privilege of the person accused either to remain silent or to say: Not guilty, prove your case. Nothing is to be inferred against a man because he may choose to take that course, but it is open to us to consider what one of us would do, what any honourable or right minded man would do, if charges were made against him which were of disgraceful character, made to an assembly of which he was a member, and which, if proved, would show him to be such a man as ought no longer to retain his seat in a body of gentlemen. This House, as the House of Commons in England, has been spoken of before now as a gentleman's club; certainly it ought not to be put upon any lower footing. And I ask you, Sir, whether this charge ought to be considered in any less careful or any more heated and partisan manner if presented to this assembly of two hundred and twenty gentlemen for our