

Supply—National Defence

the hon. member for Nanaimo, when he says that a statement made publicly in the House of Commons, and without any personal comment, was a vicious attack—

An hon. Member: What was it?

Mr. Pouliot:—on a former cabinet minister.

An hon. Member: That is not a question of privilege.

Mr. Pouliot: It is a question of privilege, surely, because I made no vicious attack against the memory of Colonel Ralston. I just mentioned a statement which is a public statement, and is recorded in *Hansard*, and I drew my conclusions from it. There was no personal word added to it, and there was no vicious attack against the late Colonel Ralston. I submit that under the circumstances the hon. member for Nanaimo should withdraw the expression "vicious attack".

Mr. Fulton: On a question of privilege—

Some hon. Members: Sit down.

Mr. Fulton: On a question of privilege; I am sure the house is glad to hear the withdrawal of the hon. member for Temiscouata with regard to this matter.

The Deputy Chairman: Order. The hon. member for Temiscouata has risen to a question of privilege and has asked the hon. member for Nanaimo to modify the expression "vicious attack". Before the hon. member for Nanaimo replies or explains the expression he used, I would refer the committee to citation 298 in *Beauchesne*, second edition, page 97, which says:

The following expressions have been ruled to be unparliamentary in the British House of Commons: Alleging that a member's statements were—

And then there is a list of some twenty expressions, one of which is "vicious and vulgar". Then above there is the expression "a malignant attack"; and I would consider the words "malignant" and "vicious" to be somewhat similar in meaning. I would ask the hon. member to consider this citation.

Mr. Pearkes: If the word "vicious" is considered unparliamentary, I should like to qualify it. Would it be proper to say "unwarranted attack"? I am not trying to be provocative. But an attack was made on the late Colonel Ralston, and he was charged with the responsibility for the loss of Canadian lives. That cannot easily be passed over. As an officer who served under the late minister of national defence I could not help resenting that remark.

Now, I do not want to prolong this argument; it was never my intention to do so. The observation has been made that the opposition has not been able to make an

effective criticism of the statements made by the government in connection with these defence estimates. The hon. member for Parkdale accused the opposition of not working on these things. I never heard any member of the government suggest before what an opposition should do in criticizing government policy—although they have quite frequently asked the opposition what they would do if they were in office.

However, those are not the main points. What I was rising to do was to make the suggestion that perhaps we might get along with a careful examination of the estimates—

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Pearkes:—and that the Minister of National Defence had suggested that, after a general discussion on the general defence policy, we might turn to the details of the estimates as they are laid out at page 269 of the book of estimates. He suggested we might deal with them in the order of administration, inspection services, civil defence, and so on, and that they should be taken one by one so that there would be a chance to discuss each of them.

I had risen earlier because I was under the impression, rightly or wrongly, that the minister wanted time to collect his thoughts in order to reply to the leader of the opposition. Then another member from the government benches spoke. Perhaps the minister might now reply to the leader of the opposition, after which we might reach the stage when the committee would consider that it had dealt sufficiently with the general matters of defence and would be prepared to go ahead.

It was suggested just before six o'clock that this item be carried; but I do not think that was in accord with the wish of the committee as expressed yesterday, or the day before, when the minister himself made the suggestion that we take these items one by one. I personally concurred in that procedure, and I think the majority of members concurred. Therefore it must be realized, as the leader of the opposition has pointed out, that we do lack a great deal of information, that there are many matters that could be discussed in a smaller committee and the anxiety of members of the opposition would thereby be relieved if they could get answers to their questions. The members of the opposition realize full well that in the interest of security they cannot ask for full explanations here. They realize that they cannot ask the minister to give such answers in the house when every word that he says may be communicated to those who may possibly be our enemies. Therefore