

Question of Privilege

Mr. Thomas (Moncton): Mr. Chairman, you allowed the minister to make a statement after I had called it one o'clock.

An hon. Member: He was answering your question.

The Chairman: Order, please. If it is the wish of the committee I will call it one o'clock.

Some hon. Members: One o'clock.
Progress reported.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: It being one o'clock the business now before the house stands adjourned pursuant to special order made Friday, June 13, 1969. I do now leave the chair until 2 p.m.

At one o'clock the house took recess.

AFTER RECESS

The house resumed at 2 p.m.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS**PRIVILEGE****MR. BALDWIN—COMPLAINT RESPECTING STATEMENT ATTRIBUTED TO MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE IN PRESS ARTICLE**

Mr. G. W. Baldwin (Peace River): Mr. Speaker, I rise at this time on a question of privilege in respect of which I have given appropriate notice. In view of the fact that it concerns the Minister of Agriculture, and since he is not in the house and I am not certain of the extent to which notice was given to him, might I simply bring the matter before the house at this time, indicating that as soon as the minister enters the chamber I will bring the matter before hon. members as I properly should.

An hon. Member: He is here, now.

Mr. Baldwin: As I indicated before the minister arrived in the chamber, Mr. Speaker, I wish to raise a question of privilege in respect of which I have sent the usual notice to Your Honour. It is a matter which affects the Minister of Agriculture. In particular, it deals with a news report which appeared under date of June 21 in the *Financial Post* under the headline: "Will Ottawa aid grain growers?"

[The Chairman.]

Underneath is a further headline: "Government certainly will—if Bud Olson has his way." Above another portion of the article is a separate headline: "Here is how Olson proposal for aid would be operated." Mr. Speaker, I do not propose to go into the contents of this lengthy article. I will only say it contains reference to a number of specific proposals for dealing with the cash position and problem of western farmers.

Your Honour may tend to dismiss this question of privilege as a mere grievance because the minister saw fit to go outside the house and make a statement. While we do not condone this, I would remind you, Mr. Speaker, that on Tuesday last a debate was launched in this house on a motion brought down by the hon. member for Nanaimo-Cowichan-The Islands dealing with this very subject. The minister participated in that debate. I am not permitted to go into details, but in the course of his statement he gave no particulars, no information to this house which could be regarded in any way as resembling the type of proposal he made known to this newspaper.

Either the minister, when he entered into the debate on Tuesday, knew that this article was to appear and was aware of the information he had given, or else he gave this information to a newspaper after the debate had concluded. In either case I submit it constitutes an abuse of the privileges of this house. This question touches the practice of the present government ever since the session started. We were told last year during our debates on procedure that there would be so many days set apart for the opposition—a lesser number than were previously available—but that these would afford the opposition opportunity to set down motions and bring forward questions for discussion in this house. The practice about which I am now complaining has gone on continuously since the session started. It is part of what I suggest is a calculated effort to downgrade the functions and the role of the House of Commons and of parliament.

The practice of making statements outside the house instead of in this chamber shows a calculated contempt for the functions which parliament should fulfil. It is a practice which is constantly growing and I suggest that within a limited time this house will not be performing its functions in the way in which the people of this country expect them to be performed.

We shall shortly be met with a request from the government to agree to changes in