

since I wrote to you on March 28th and on the morning of April 27th.

In your letter you again refer to my "allegations" made in the House on March 14th. That description of the recorded exchange between the Prime Minister and myself as set forth in Hansard for March 14th is not true and having regard to your professional experience at the Bar of your Province I can draw no other conclusion than that you are quite aware that no words used by me and as recorded in Hansard for March 14th can by the greatest stretch of the imagination be construed as "allegations". It is true that Mr. Pringle used that term in his motion and, similarly, the Prime Minister. But for you to suggest that I used that term is a deliberate distortion of the record the motivation for which I can only assume is political partisanship.

With respect to the 3rd paragraph of your letter of April 27th, you say that the Steering Committee "unanimously found it unnecessary and premature" to implement any of the suggestions made to you in my letter of March 28th. Yet in the same paragraph of your letter you state that the course of action to be followed by the Committee is up to its members. This being so I find it strange indeed that the suggestions in my letter of March 28th were not disclosed to the members of the Committee for their consideration rather than making the decision in the Steering Committee dominated by Liberal members. Then too, I am informed by our representative on the Steering Committee that your statement as to the unanimity of this decision is not true. On the contrary, I am informed that you and other members of the Steering Committee were strongly urged to adopt the suggestions set forth in my letter of March 28th.

The fact that

1. You refused me the courtesy of a reply to my letter of March 28th until yesterday, and
2. you and your Liberal colleagues on the Steering Committee refused to disclose the suggestions in my letter of March 28th for the consideration of members of the Committee, and
3. you falsely state in your letter of April 27th that the decision of the Steering Committee was unanimous

have, in part, justified me in concluding political bias on your part as Chairman of the Committee. This is not an "insinuation" or an "allegation" as you put it in your letter to me but rather a blunt statement of my opinion.

You really should not have been surprised at my action in providing to the press copies of my letters to you. Notwithstanding the fact that I had written to you over a month ago the Committee held several meetings where you had ample opportunity to disclose my suggestions of March 28th but elected not to do so. Your lack of action in this regard, naturally, resulted in a press treatment which was, to say the least, imbalanced in favour of the political purpose of the Liberals.

Your refusal to reply to my letter and your refusal to allow its contents to be exposed left me with no alternative than to do so myself. Now, at least, both points of view are exposed to the media.

In summary, I suggest to you that I am fully justified in my conclusion that the motion of Mr. Pringle and the statements and actions of Liberal members of the Committee (and the Steering Committee) both in Committee and to the media, have but one objective—a witch hunt or, at the very least, to cause personal political embarrassment to me. I will have no part of subverting the use of Standing Committees to such purposes.

The Committee has a useful and legitimate task to perform and it can do so by following the suggestions I put to you in my letter of March 28th. Accordingly, until such time as you and your Liberal colleagues abandon political partisanship in favour of a meaningful enquiry by the Committee, I have no intention of contributing in any way to its activities.

Sincerely,

Erik Nielsen

EN:dk

Mr. Mahoney, a Member of the Queen's Privy Council, laid upon the Table,—Report of the Auditor General to the House of Commons for the fiscal year ended March 31, 1971. (English and French).—Sessional Paper No. 284-1/64.

Pursuant to Standing Order 39(4), the following five Questions were made Orders of the House for Returns:

No. 158—*Mr. Harding*

1. What amount was spent by each federal department and agency, including the Prime Minister's office, on travelling expenses of their staffs in each of the past three fiscal years?
2. What amount was spent by each on entertainment in each of the past three fiscal years?—Sessional Paper No. 284-2/158.

No. 160—*Mr. Harding*

1. (a) How many pieces of the following office equipment were purchased by each federal department and agency in each of the past three fiscal years and what were the costs for each category (i) typewriters (ii) dictaphones (iii) tape recorders (iv) adding machines (v) calculating machines (b) what was the total stock of this equipment in each federal department and agency for each of the five categories as of March 31, 1971?
2. What was the total cost of purchases and installation of office furnishings for (a) furniture (b) carpets and carpeting (c) draperies and blinds (d) others, in each federal department and agency in each of the past three fiscal years?—Sessional Paper No. 284-2/160.