

feel that this matter requires more inquiry and more examination than that action alone can supply. Therefore, in addition to the suggestion of my hon. friend that the Auditor General be ordered to appear at the bar of the House I suggest that there ought to be a deeper investigation and inquiry into this situation. If, therefore, Your Honour thinks I have established a prima facie case of privilege I would move:

• (1440)

That the complaint of the Auditor General that the government has failed to provide him with such officers and employees as are necessary to enable him to perform his duties, as required by Section 56(4) of the Financial Administration Act, and his consequent failure to submit his report in time, be referred to the Standing Committee on Public Accounts, and that the said committee hear the Auditor General and other witnesses and report its recommendations thereon not later than March 29.

If the government is carrying out its duties as it ought to, if it has nothing to hide, if it has the courage of the convictions which it constantly expresses, but in a hypocritical tones of which I am getting sick—

**Some hon. Members:** Oh, oh!

**Mr. Lewis:**—then the government will place such a motion before the House and I will be glad to support it.

**Mr. Speaker:** Order, please. Hon. members will appreciate that there is something a bit unusual about the procedure we are following this afternoon, but of course it is somewhat unusual to have all these notices about the same circumstances. However, having heard the hon. member for Peace River and the hon. member for York South, probably the best course of action to follow in the circumstances is to hear brief presentations from hon. members in support of their proposed motions. This will give an opportunity for the Chair to consider the matter in its broader aspects, in toto. Chronologically, the next motion of which the Chair received notice came from the hon. member for Annapolis Valley.

MR. NOWLAN—DELAY IN TABLING AUDITOR GENERAL'S REPORT

**Mr. J. P. Nowlan (Annapolis Valley):** Mr. Speaker, I will attempt to be brief, but the point is serious. It raises matters of substance which cannot be sloughed off by catcalls across the way. I did give notice for that reason and to anticipate the President of the Privy Council (Mr. MacEachen) saying that this did not come to the attention of the House at the earliest possible moment.

I was in the House yesterday, Mr. Speaker. Frankly, I could not believe what I thought my ears had heard. It was only when I saw the printed record of this institution that I obtained confirmation of the allegation by the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau), an allegation without foundation in the parliamentary annals of the House of Commons, be it on this or the other side of the Atlantic, the Commons across the way that is commonly called the Mother of Parliaments.

Neither the hon. member for Peace River (Mr. Baldwin) nor the hon. member for York South (Mr. Lewis) referred directly to the words used by the Prime Minister. They

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were an insult to my eyes when I read the printed page. I have tried to give the Prime Minister the benefit of the doubt in the first reference to illegality alleged against the Auditor General when, in answer to a question, the Prime Minister said, as recorded at page 635 of *Hansard*:

—if an officer of Parliament is breaking the law—

In effect he said, don't ask me why he is breaking the law. By innuendo there is a suggestion that the Auditor General is breaking the law, but you cannot raise a question of privilege in this institution where innuendo and imputation are sometimes the order of the day. But in answer to the hon. member for Calgary Centre (Mr. Harkness) the Prime Minister, still conditional and still philosophizing, said:

If parliament wants to condone his breaking the law and not do anything about it—

Thereby the innuendo is removed and by direct reference the Prime Minister is suggesting that the Auditor General is breaking the law of the land. If he is breaking the law of the land, then we can come before Your Honour with a question of privilege.

I suggest this is serious because there are only three servants of this House of Commons—the Chief Electoral Officer, the Official Languages Commissioner and the Auditor General. They are beyond appointment by any department and in their respective capacities and areas of competence are the conscience of this parliament. We are not going to talk about elections and the Chief Electoral Officer, but that is pretty fundamental to the law of the land. This does not involve an area of culture that is part of the history of this land, a responsibility of the Official Languages Commissioner. We are dealing in terms of auditing facts and figures, the power of the purse. The Auditor General is in fact the ombudsman of the purse of Canadian taxpayers from coast to coast.

To suggest even casually that the Auditor General is in breach of the law deserves and demands rebuke, Mr. Speaker. Parliament is the conscience of the land. If this Commons is painted with illegality, how can it discharge the responsibility of being the conscience of the land? The voice in the wilderness across the way is why there is such a thing as privilege. You have to start tying matters down to rules. Whether the Prime Minister likes it or not, there are rules and regulations which governed this institution long before he came here and will govern it long after he is gone.

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Nowlan:** My question of privilege arises from the fact that there is a reflection on the dignity of this House. There are three parts to my question of privilege. I am not going through some of the travesties which have been attached to the dignity of the House by words that have been said both in and out of the House and allegations about the status of members. They have had a deleterious effect on the dignity of this House and on the House discharging its duties. When you have accusations of partiality and discourtesy against members of this House, when you have libels against members of this House that in effect concern the character and conduct of members of the House—