

*Question of Privilege*

generous interpretation of the words I used the other day when I was trying to give a ruling.

The minister is reported as having said that a charge against him is spurious and designed to damage his reputation. The hon. member for Edmonton-Strathcona argued that the minister's statement imputed an improper motive and concluded that his honour and integrity have been impugned. As I also mentioned a moment ago, if the statement of the Minister of National Defence had been uttered in the house in the course of debate and the hon. member for Edmonton-Strathcona had risen on a question of privilege to claim that these words were unparliamentary and that the minister was imputing motives—well, this is done regularly, and the Chair would have intervened, I suggest, and would have brought to the attention of the minister that he has no right to impute motives. The minister would have been given an opportunity to explain. Whether it should be explained to the satisfaction of the member complaining is another thing.

If this statement had been uttered in the course of debate and the members offended had not been satisfied by the explanation given by the member, I wonder whether he would have considered it a question of privilege sufficient to send to the committee on privileges and elections the conduct of the member who uttered the words which allegedly offended another member of the house.

What we have to determine, I submit, is the seriousness of the alleged offence in order to decide whether there is a question of privilege. The hon. member said that the statement made by the Minister of National Defence impugned his very honour and integrity. I have some doubt about this. I suggest to the hon. member that this is really the whole point; do the words spoken by the Minister of National Defence in fact carry such a serious import or serious connotation that the very honour and integrity of the hon. member for Edmonton-Strathcona is impugned, or that his integrity and his honour have been placed in question. He may feel they have, and some hon. members may feel his honour and integrity have been placed in jeopardy. But it is the judgment of the Chair that has to be considered, and I must say that in my judgment the minister's words—in spite of the fact that the hon. member may have been aggrieved, in spite of the fact that he may have a very serious grievance

[Mr. Speaker.]

against the minister for the words which were spoken as reported in the *Ottawa Journal*—did not impute an offence to him.

I suggest the offence is not so serious that it could be considered by this house as impugning the integrity and honesty of the hon. member for Edmonton-Strathcona to the extent that the Minister of National Defence should be asked to explain his conduct and his words before the committee on privileges and elections. I understand from precedents that it is only on very rare occasions that words spoken either in debate or outside the house by a member of this honourable house were investigated by the committee on privileges and elections. I understand this may have happened only perhaps two or three times in some 20 or 25 years.

In all objectivity and in all fairness to the hon. member for Edmonton-Strathcona, to the minister, and to members of this house I have looked at this matter, and to the best of my conscience I cannot see that these are words—recognizing the prima facie case of privilege—such as would justify sending the matter to the committee on privileges and elections. With regret for the hon. member for Edmonton-Strathcona, and in full appreciation of his difficult position, I must rule accordingly.

**Mr. Nugent:** Mr. Speaker, I rise on a question of privilege arising out of what you said regarding the motion. I apologize to the Chair for not having presented the motion. There might be some suggestion that I had not been ready, and I should like to ask Your Honour to remember that last Wednesday when I gave the notice of the question of privilege I presented to you at that time a motion which I intended to move. I did the same thing on Thursday. On neither occasion was I asked to move a motion though I had one ready. I should like to make clear that at all times I had a motion ready and was waiting only for the prima facie case to be established first.

**Mr. Speaker:** I sustain the hon. member on this point. When he came to see me shortly before 2.30 to bring me the motion I did indicate to him that I recognized he had not been invited to make a motion. Perhaps we were both at fault. If it has caused any embarrassment to him, I apologize. It becomes theoretical, however, because even if the motion had been made I would have had to rule against it unless I considered there was a prima facie case of privilege.