

future. It has to do with a communication that I want to make to you and which is absolutely foreign to my occupation as a newspaperman. Would it be possible to receive me on Saturday next or on any other Saturday? Please let me know as soon as possible.

I replied to that letter on May 15 in which I said—

Mr. Gardiner: Before you continue, may I be permitted; is it proper for personal correspondence either to be placed on the table or read to this house? Are we going to be put in the position where if we have any personal correspondence at all as members somebody can suggest that it ought to be put on the table or read to this house?

Mr. Speaker: It is simply that I want to make sure and I want hon. members to be sure that, as the editorial seemed to suggest that I did write to the newspaper in order to have certain things published, I have no objection personally to tabling the correspondence. The man who was responsible for the editorial is in Ottawa at the moment. He was in my office last evening and he is in the gallery now. He wrote me a letter of regret as to the procedure in this case which has been published in the newspapers. There is no question about it that the man was not thinking to do any harm because he is just as sorry as anybody can be. I know that he did not want to do me any harm, and that is certain. Two paragraphs have been taken from a private letter in which I told him I would see him on any day between Monday and Friday inclusive. He wrote me back and enclosed a copy of the article which he had written and told me that he would be in Ottawa on Friday, June 29. He arrived last night around five o'clock. At that time I said to him that he had arrived at the right time because of something I wanted to tell him about his editorial. He said, "Well, I am very sorry." The explanation he gave for that was that he had had an experience years ago in Quebec city, where he was a parliamentary correspondent.

This man, I may inform the house, is an elderly man; he is about 75 years of age; and he has had various experiences throughout his long career as a newspaperman. He remembered that the Hon. Mr. Weir—these are the facts that he told me himself; I do not know about them—that the Hon. Mr. Weir, when he was Speaker in the legislature of Quebec, had put someone else in his place, had taken the floor and had taken part in the debate. He thought that, as the member for Vaudreuil-Soulanges, I still had the right to take part in debate, and he saw nothing wrong in taking an excerpt from this letter. That is the explanation of this editorial.

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He stressed the point that the Speaker still remains member for the constituency he represents and that, therefore, he is entitled to speak. I say again, it was not my intention, and I did not write to the newspaper. All this correspondence has been addressed to him personally at his residence in the city of Longueuil, and it has been admitted by him. I think that if one reads the explanation that appeared in the *Globe and Mail*, which I read today, it gives a good account of the facts pertaining to this situation.

Mr. Drew: Before the Acting Prime Minister replies, may I make some comments in regard to what has been said by the Speaker. I direct my remarks to the Acting Prime Minister as the acting head of the government. I do so in the utmost solemnity.

Already, at the suggestion of Mr. Speaker himself, a motion of censure was presented in view of certain discussions that had taken place. When the Speaker said that there was any hesitancy about hearing him, I would point out that no one indicated any unwillingness to hear the Speaker and, in fact, there was every indication that the Speaker felt perfectly free to present to the house any facts he deemed advisable, as evidenced by the proposition he put before the house on one occasion in regard to certain decisions he himself has made.

However, these are irrelevant, so far as the central issue is now concerned. In fact, the question as to whether it was or was not intended that this letter be published is in itself irrelevant, when we recognize the rule of the Speaker in relation to this house. Whether the Speaker is a permanent Speaker, as at Westminster, or a Speaker chosen by a motion of all the members, as is done here, the Speaker, if there is to be any dignity in the proceedings of the house, must command the confidence of the members that the decisions he makes will be impartial decisions within the reasonable bounds of human frailty. Whether it was intended that this letter be published or not is in itself unimportant. We now know that the Speaker, whose impartiality we are expected to respect, holds the opinion that arguments that were made here falsified the facts or, to use the alternative expression the Speaker has used, distorted the facts for political ends.

I would point out that if these words were spoken of any member in this house it would be the duty of the Speaker to call for a retraction immediately. They would not be permitted. Whether or not it was intended that they be published, these were the thoughts of the Speaker, and we know they were the thoughts of the Speaker because,