

Alleged Irregularity in Defence Estimates

question before us is whether there is a question of privilege, and clearly this is not a question of privilege.

• (3:20 p.m.)

Right Hon. J. G. Diefenbaker (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, the house has listened to the words of wisdom of the dean of the house, and it was of interest that included in his presentation was a spanking of the Minister of National Defence. He pointed out that it was very wrong for anyone to refer to evidence in a committee until that committee had reported. This was the very thing that had been done by the Minister of National Defence; and if the debate so far has been effectual in any way it has certainly been so with the contribution of the Acting Prime Minister in putting the Minister of National Defence in his proper place.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Hellyer: Explain.

Mr. Diefenbaker: This is just another example of the flagrant manner in which this minister defies parliament with the passage of the days. I have seen examples of it multiplying, the attitude of the minister being that after all ministers have a right to unalloyed arrogance.

Mr. McIlraith: Order.

Mr. Pickersgill: What about leaders of the opposition?

Mr. Diefenbaker: The hon. gentleman used to be over here. He qualified fully. It is the arrogance of a minister endeavouring to trample on the rights of parliament.

It is said that this book of estimates really means nothing. If it does not mean anything, for what reason was it presented? It is now before the House of Commons and we will be asked, when a motion is made for interim supply and the vote on it takes place, to grant that supply on the basis of the estimates in the book that is now before us.

What has taken place here is very clear. In 1966-67, as one reads the defence estimates, one finds references to various elements in the defence forces such as Royal Canadian Navy, Royal Canadian Naval Reserve, Royal Canadian Sea Cadets, and so on. I realize that under this government "royal" has become a dirty word.

Some hon. Members: Shame.

[Mr. Martin (Essex East).]

Mr. Diefenbaker: I repeat it; "royal" has become a dirty word.

Some hon. Members: Shame.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. Can we have order, please?

Mr. Muir (Cape Breton North and Victoria): The truth hurts.

Mr. Diefenbaker: Then, if it has not, why is it being removed? Every possible vestige of our royal connection is being removed by this government, and it is now done in the estimates.

Mr. Martin (Essex East): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker, you said a moment ago that in view of the statements made by the hon. member for Winnipeg South Centre and the hon. member for Edmonton West you would allow a certain latitude. For that reason you allowed the Minister of National Defence to reply to certain statements that were made.

I can only assume from that observation that there has been enough discussion of matters that are not properly before the house, and I submit to Your Honour with the greatest respect that the only issue now is whether this is a question of privilege. If that ruling is not made now I suggest the right hon. gentleman will go on introducing irrelevancies, creating confusion, instead of addressing himself to the only question before the house. I feel it is surely not too much to ask the right hon. gentleman who, along with whoever is acting head of the government in this house is an officer of the house, to recognize that we both have a responsibility—

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Martin (Essex East):—to see that the rules are observed; and my right hon. friend knows that the only question now before the house is whether this is a question of privilege, and nothing else.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. I have to recognize that the Leader of the Opposition has the right to make observations on the question of privilege, and I am sure he will limit his consideration to the question of privilege.

Mr. Diefenbaker: Mr. Speaker, I always like to sit at the feet of Gamaliel, but when it comes to his views on rules, disregard of the