

Inquiries of the Ministry

Mr. J. J. Greene (Renfrew South): As a supplementary question, in view of the fact that some of the departmental officials of the representation commissioner have indicated that they may not have authority under the act as it exists to conduct a hearing into this fraudulent election, would the Minister of Justice consider setting up a judicial inquiry where these alleged frauds could be discussed publicly and under oath, rather than in camera as was envisaged in the type of private inquiry suggested by the leader of the N.D.P.?

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. T. C. Douglas (Burnaby-Coquitlam): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a question of privilege. The hon. member is seeking to impute motives when he says I envisaged a private inquiry. My motion called for an inquiry by the chief electoral officer, the person most familiar with these things and having in his possession all the facts regarding the conduct of the general election. It seemed to me he was the most appropriate person, and whether he decides to hold his hearings privately or publicly is a matter of no concern to me.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Douglas: All I want is that a person properly qualified shall make a full and complete investigation into the allegations contained in the Vancouver *Province* of February 22 and report his findings to the house, and then the house can decide what action to take with respect to them. If the government decided to lay charges against any person who it is suggested acted fraudulently, and if the committee on privileges and elections decides that some member has no right to occupy his seat, then those are decisions that would have to follow. But I deny categorically that I at any time envisioned a secret investigation, and if the government decides to have a judicial investigation that will suit the purposes of this party completely.

Mr. Greene: On the question of privilege I would point out that the party which the hon. gentleman leads supported a public inquiry under oath when it came to questions of privilege with respect to the hon. member for Labelle and the hon. member for Lapointe, but when it came to a question of privilege concerning alleged fraudulent election of their own members that kind of public inquiry was not satisfactory to them, nor did they suggest that a judicial inquiry be engaged in by the chief electoral officer.

Mr. Colin Cameron (Nanaimo-Cowichan-The Islands): Mr. Speaker, there was no sug-

[Mr. Pearson.]

gestion, as has been brought forward by the hon. member for Renfrew South, or whatever it is, that we opposed the idea of a judicial inquiry. The matter was never mentioned, but so far as I am concerned I would be glad to have it. I do not propose to allow the Liberal party to have a three ring circus in the privileges and elections committee in which they can start smears in order to smother the very bad record of their own party.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I do not think it is in order to continue with this discussion. A decision of the house has been reached; it has been communicated to the chief electoral officer, and I am awaiting a reply from him.

Mr. Richard Cashin (St. John's West): On a question of privilege arising out of the remarks which have just been made in this house, the hon. member for Renfrew South was quite correct and hon. gentlemen opposite were incorrect. If they consult *Hansard* for the date in question they will find I clearly pointed out to members of the New Democratic party that they have two standards, one for the hon. member for Labelle and the rest of us, and one for themselves. That is on the record, and they cannot deny the fact.

Mr. Speaker: Order. It would be of material assistance if we could get back to the hon. member for Lapointe, who asked the original question.

Mr. Douglas: On a question of privilege, Your Honour has allowed the hon. member for Renfrew South to present arguments on a spurious question of privilege—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. I think the hon. member must recognize that the Chair cannot determine a question until it is heard. Whether it is spurious or not, I at least have to hear it.

Mr. Greene: The spurious question of privilege was the one raised by the hon. member, not by myself. He asked me a supplementary question. There is only one question of privilege.

Mr. Speaker: May I suggest for the benefit of all hon. members that this matter was decided by the house in a certain way, and the decision has been communicated to the officer suggested in the motion. I suggest we leave it there for the moment until we have some communication from that particular officer.