

*Question of Privilege*

made in the testimony, so the house could see for itself that I could not honestly be charged with bringing in a spurious charge and no one could seriously say that this course was not taken in a very serious manner and that the facts alleged do not constitute, if proven, a very serious breach of the privileges of this house. The motion I had intended to make yesterday reads as follows:

That the allegation made this day by the hon. member for Edmonton-Strathcona against the Minister of National Defence, Hon. Paul Hellyer, be referred to the standing committee on privileges and elections to deal with and inquire into the evidence and the witnesses before the standing committee on national defence during this session of parliament, and the practices and procedures involving witnesses, and evidence in appearances before the said committee, and in particular with regard to Admiral Landymore's appearance.

It will be obvious from reading that motion that the motion itself indicates, had the minister read it, that instead of making a spurious charge I had indicated to the house that I intended to refer this matter to the committee on privileges and elections. As will be seen from the motion, it was not just Admiral Landymore's testimony that should be investigated, but the facts I have in my possession indicate that the testimony of every witness heard by that committee must be viewed with very serious doubt. From the remarks made by the minister and also from the course of conduct in this matter it is obvious that the house should consider rules to guide witnesses, ministers and senior officials, so that when people are called before a committee of the House of Commons they may plainly understand what are the limitations of authority of a minister in giving advice to people who want to prepare and present a case.

I hope I have made a prima facie case, Mr. Speaker, and perhaps you will now allow me to proceed to the evidence that I think it is necessary to give the house so the gravity of the situation may be understood. I think the minister would concur in this.

He said on page 8572 of *Hansard*:

I make that suggestion because I do not think the alleged facts as presented here today can be separated from other facts and questions that will no doubt be considered at the time that committee meets. I think this matter should be considered in a forum where—

He was then interrupted. It seems to me, Mr. Speaker, that considering the statement I made yesterday and the charges I laid, which were unanswered; and the fact that the minister has impugned my honour and integrity, I have the right to ask that the matter be

[Mr. Nugent.]

referred to the committee on privileges and elections. I will therefore make a motion to that effect as soon as the Speaker has decided that I have made a prima facie case.

**Hon. Paul Hellyer (Minister of National Defence):** Mr. Speaker, I am sorry my hon. friend took offence at the word "spurious". To the best of my knowledge and belief it is not an unparliamentary word. If I am wrong in that contention I will be pleased to have you so inform me. Similarly I was not imputing any motives. At the time I made the reference to the word "spurious", I was unaware of the full range of meaning of that word, but after looking it up in Webster's Seventh New Collegiate Dictionary I was surprised to find I had hit the nail right on the head.

**Mr. Nugent:** I cannot accept that as a satisfactory explanation, because I am afraid the minister's statement that his use of the word was unintentional does not get around the statement which he made very clearly and forcefully and which appears on page 8572 of *Hansard*. He said:

It is clear that the object of this exercise is merely to frustrate the business planned for this afternoon.

He certainly knew the meaning of those words and did not have to look them up in a dictionary. I suggest that in view of this, because of the suggestion made and the way it was reported in the press, my name can now only be cleared by the sort of hearing that is necessary to clear the minister's name. I would therefore like to proceed with my question of privilege if the Chair will permit me to do so.

**Mr. Speaker:** The hon. member has asked the Chair to rule on whether he has a prima facie case of privilege. I have not been given an opportunity to do so until now. I do not want to interrupt the hon. member; since he suggested yesterday that I interfered a little hastily I will try not to get into difficulty with him in the same way today.

If hon. members agree and if no further contributions are forthcoming from either side of the house on whether the use of the word "spurious" is unparliamentary to the extent that it impugns the integrity and honour of the hon. member, this is the only point I have to consider. The hon. member also referred to two other statements made by the minister. But what the hon. member is saying is that the word "spurious" is unparliamentary and that it impugns the honour and integrity of the hon. member. I can