

Question of Privilege

Mr. Caouette: I rise on a question of privilege.

Mr. Speaker: Order. One question of privilege at a time. We are now considering a question of privilege. I suggest to the hon. member for Villeneuve (Mr. Caouette) to let the hon. member for Saint-Hyacinthe-Bagot complete his remarks, and if afterwards he wishes to rise on a point of order, I will listen to him.

Mr. Caouette: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member for Saint-Hyacinthe-Bagot is not speaking on a question of privilege.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. member for Saint-Hyacinthe-Bagot is evidently taking part in the discussion on the question of privilege raised by the hon. member for Edmonton-Strathcona (Mr. Nugent).

Mr. Ricard: I was saying, Mr. Speaker, that I am a French Canadian and a Conservative member from the province of Quebec. As Quebec Conservatives, we have, year after year suffered from prejudices stirred up against all Conservatives in general and especially against the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Diefenbaker).

Well, the starting point of such prejudices, Mr. Speaker, was precisely this kind of article.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I think that the hon. member is straying from the subject and I feel that we will not make much progress if the house embarks upon such a general discussion as that which the hon. member for Saint Hyacinthe-Bagot wants to start now. I would ask him to sum up his comments as much as possible to help the Speaker render a decision on the matter now before him.

Mr. Ricard: Mr. Speaker, I am simply dealing with the remarks put forth by the member for Villeneuve. I want to point out to Your Honour that articles such as those which my hon. friend, the hon. member for Edmonton-Strathcona (Mr. Nugent) complains about are the cause of prejudices which, year after year, have been stirred up against the Conservative party and against its leader.

I would like the motion of my hon. friend to be accepted in order to throw light on this matter. Those who are afraid of light will surely object to its discussion. I have only one purpose: to throw light on the matter so that everyone knows whether the article in

[Mr. Ricard.]

question is a breach of privilege as the hon. member for Edmonton-Strathcona claims.

• (3:00 p.m.)

Mr. Raymond Langlois (Mégantic): Mr. Speaker, if I deal with the question of privilege at this time, it is not in order to take up the cudgels on behalf of a party or some individual, but merely to establish whether the question of privilege is well taken or not, and, in a word, try and enlighten the Chair, rather than to attempt to make some political capital out of this, for the Conservatives or others.

Mr. Speaker, I listened very carefully a moment ago when the member for Edmonton West (Mr. Lambert), referred to the incident which happened in 1962, and more particularly to the motion I introduced at the time, which was seconded by the present Minister of National Defence.

Mr. Speaker, the present circumstances are entirely different. First of all, the other case involved a delegation of Canadian parliamentaries whose integrity had been questioned in a newspaper item which we felt was untrue. That is why we had asked that the matter be settled in the committee on privileges and elections, in order to protect the interests of Canadian delegations abroad. That article had given rise to some dissatisfaction not only in Canada but also among all those participating in that conference held in Europe. Therefore the circumstances in both cases are entirely different.

In this case, a journalist has expressed his views under his signature. As the member for Villeneuve (Mr. Caouette) said earlier, a journalist has the right to express his personal opinion, whether it be right or wrong, and I could not care less. And as the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Diefenbaker) just mentioned himself, I am not so much concerned with the views expressed by a reporter, but with the question of freedom, and we should be ready to give our life's blood in order to protect his right to express his views. I am not expressing an opinion regarding such views, but I may be able to throw some light on the matter for the benefit of the member for Saint-Hyacinthe-Bagot or any other.

Mr. Speaker, I admit that we have freedom of the press but even so, we must respect the professional ethics of our journalists, who are Canadian citizens and who have also a responsibility toward public opinion and