

*Privileges of The House*

said, namely, that I was unduly impatient in pressing the matter and was anxious for political reasons to have the hon. member put in a difficult and unpleasant position. I let the matter stand over simply because I wished to be careful not to have any possibility of any misunderstanding of the kind arise.

The hon. member said nothing; he let the opportunity go by, and then what did he do? To the press he gave an interpretation of his words which if anything enlarged the insinuations and imputations so that they became reflections not merely on members of the ministry but upon the supporters of the government in their entirety. I therefore made up my mind that my duty was to introduce a motion of the kind which I have introduced to-day unless on coming into the house the hon. member was to make full retraction of his statement. When hon. members assembled, His Honour the Speaker gave to the house the statement which is now on record as to what he as the Speaker of this house believed was the course which should be taken. When I spoke on Monday I did not make any request of the hon. member. I made a statement to His Honour the Speaker as to what I believed was the proper procedure in a matter of this kind. I felt it was my duty to direct the attention of His Honour the Speaker and of hon. members of the house generally to, or to remind them of, the procedure that should be followed. The words that I used were the following:

I submit, Mr. Speaker, that the hon. member should be obliged either to withdraw the statement completely or else to convert it into a specific charge to be investigated in the usual manner, and the consequences of the investigation also to be followed up in the usual manner.

If I had made no reference to the procedure or the steps that should be taken, I should have been at fault in my position as leader of the house seeking to maintain its rights and privileges. To-day His Honour the Speaker has made to the house a statement which accords fully with the procedure I outlined. His Honour has drawn to the attention of the hon. member for Laval-Two Mountains the fact that there are two courses open to him: either he must withdraw unconditionally, or he should make a charge and ask that it be investigated, with the consequences of the investigation as they may happen to be. Up to that time I had said nothing. The hon. member for Laval-Two Mountains rose in his place but he did not make an unconditional withdrawal of his statement. Instead of that he used language which would make it possible for him to say that he had never made an unconditional withdrawal.

[Mr. Mackenzie King.]

Mr. HANSON (York-Sunbury): He said that he had not used the language attributed to him in the English version as given by the Prime Minister on Monday. I think that would be a correct interpretation of what he said.

Mr. MACKENZIE KING: He also used certain qualifying words which at the moment I have forgotten. First, his withdrawal was quite conditional. What impressed me at the time he spoke was that he not only did not withdraw his statement; he went farther in his insinuations against others by intimating to this house that while it might not have been members of the administration who had become millionaires, there were gentlemen in the public service to-day who were giving their services to the country at a time of war but who had used their positions to become millionaires. That was a reflection upon a still larger group, composed of those who at this moment are seeking to assist the nation in the carrying on of the war effort. If I had allowed that kind of explanation to go as a withdrawal, I wonder what would have been said to me as to my anxiety not to press the matter. It would have been said I wished to get out of having any investigation at all because it might reflect upon members of the administration or my own followers.

As I say, my hon. friend made no unconditional withdrawal. It was then I introduced the motion, and only then. As a result of the considerate attitude which I took in this house yesterday, what impression has been given to the public in the press of to-day? If hon. members will look at this morning's newspapers, they will see it reported as I have no doubt many of them have, in more than one journal that because the Prime Minister did not proceed with further action yesterday in order to have this matter investigated there were all kinds of murmurings in the corridors, that there were expressions of discontent among his own following and others for his not having gone on with the matter immediately; and the impression would be and I have no doubt has been left in the minds of a large number of persons in this country that I was deliberately seeking to avoid pursuing the matter further. Could I have taken any course to-day other than to demand that at least this matter be referred to the committee on privileges and elections, without permanently leaving in the minds of many citizens of Canada the feeling that I had neglected to press this matter further because there were in my own mind reasons which made it inadvisable so to do? It is easy