

*Motion for Adjournment*

should be seized with this matter is the committee on national defence. That is the course I would recommend.

**Mr. Diefenbaker:** Right away?

**Mr. Hellyer:** If it is felt that the committee on privileges and elections should deal with this matter, I have no objection because I want to clear my name, which is more precious to me than anything else.

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Gilles Grégoire (Lapointe):** Mr. Speaker, in the five years I have been sitting in the house I have often heard requests for inquiries information, but it is the first time, as far as I know that a formal charge has been made against a member of the cabinet—the first time in five years. It is not an inquiry which is asked for at the present time. The hon. member for Edmonton-Strathcona (Mr. Nugent) has laid a formal charge against the Minister of National Defence (Mr. Hellyer).

In view of the fact that such a thing happens very seldom, namely that a formal charge is laid against a minister of the crown, then it becomes an urgent matter which should be debated forthwith.

When the hon. member for Edmonton-Strathcona raised the question of privilege a little earlier and laid his formal charge, and even after you had rendered your decision, Mr. Speaker, on the question of privilege, the Minister of National Defence had at that time the right, under the standing orders of the house, because it was for him the first possible opportunity before a formal charge, to rise in his turn on the question of privilege and to deny the whole thing. He did not do it, he allowed the charge to be made. And again during those last few minutes, he has been asking that the matter be referred to a committee saying that the matter dates back a few months.

Mr. Speaker, I submit that this matter does not date back a few months. Must a problem exist in fact when rumours start making the rounds or only when the rumours are substantiated?

The hon. member for Edmonton-Strathcona stated today only that he has evidence to substantiate those rumours which have been circulating. I submit, Mr. Speaker, that the first possible opportunity is not when the rumours start but when a man has the evidence. If charges were to be laid each time a rumour starts, it would be unthinkable for

[Mr. Hellyer.]

the man who wants to make a charge but lacks the time to get the necessary evidence and it would become unbearable for those against whom a charge would be laid.

I think that the first possible opportunity exists not when rumours start circulating but when evidence is produced to show that they are accurate and justified. And it is only today, it is only since the beginning of the sitting that such evidence has been laid before the house. Until now, there were only rumours. And I always refused to believe them as long as a formal charge had not been laid and evidence produced.

Therefore, the first possible opportunity is today, not before. Therefore, it is not a problem which dates back a few months, it is a problem which arose at the time when the evidence was laid before us.

Now, about the urgency of debate, Mr. Speaker. It is that there will be other committees sitting this afternoon and tomorrow morning and tomorrow afternoon.

• (3:50 p.m.)

Will members attend those meetings while thinking: This committee may not be serious; how can we be sure that the Minister of Finance (Mr. Sharp) has not altered the evidence of witnesses at the committee on consumer credit? How can we be sure that in the committee on the public service of Canada, which is sitting at present, the Minister of National Revenue and President of the Privy Council (Mr. Benson), has not altered the evidence given by witnesses? Is it possible from now on for committees to sit unless a clear and specific explanation is given about the problem raised?

Mr. Speaker, I feel that the committees cannot sit as long as this matter has not been threshed out and the sittings of committees are still more urgent than the debate on medicare this afternoon.

The urgency of the debate Mr. Speaker. The word urgent is an epithet. Now, if it is an epithet, it is relative. Einstein in his theory on relativity states that everything is relative even the Absolute.

Can the debate taken in its present context be deemed to be really urgent? Let us consider the item on the agenda this afternoon: medicare. Now, we have been told that medicare would not come into effect before the 1st of July, 1968. Is it therefore so urgent to discuss medicare? Which matter is more urgent?

One which may be passed this afternoon and shelved for a year and a half or another which questions the integrity of a minister of