

*Question of Privilege*

**Mr. Nielsen:** If Your Honour will permit me, that is what I was proceeding to do. Beauchesne, citation 108(3) at page 98 indicates the importance of libels on members of the house. Beauchesne says that they have been "constantly punished," and further he says:

—the libel must be based on matters arising in the actual transaction of the business of the house.

The Minister of Justice made charges, both in and out of parliament, which, if allowed to stand constitute a libel on the former prime minister of this country and every member of his government. He stated that the Leader of the Opposition had acted improperly in a security matter of which, because of his position as Minister of Justice, he is assumed by all members of the house to have particular knowledge.

Now, sir, I believe that this is a grave and serious libel, and that truth is the only defence to it. I say the minister, and this is the nub of the question of privilege, is called upon now to prove the truth of these statements in the house. It cannot be done by a committee. The charges were not made in a committee. They were made by the minister on his own responsibility, both in the house and outside it, in the enjoyment of all of his privilege as a minister of the crown and as a member of the Privy Council. He, and he alone, must accept the responsibility for the insinuations which he has raised and the charges which he has made.

All of these matters, as the minister pointed out, arose out of the consideration of his estimates and thus, "in the actual transaction of the business of the house." Some arose immediately and others were compounded by the minister's statements outside the house as well as by his further statements here today when he said, and he repeated, sir, that the conduct of the Leader of the Opposition should be the subject of a royal commission inquiry.

Having gone that far, and he took it upon his own responsibility to proceed that far, he is now, I submit, under an obligation, under a ministerial duty as a member of the government and as possessor of the portfolio which he holds, to go farther and to say upon what these basest of charges are founded. I say, sir, if he does not do this, which he has an obligation to do, then he must resign.

In further support of the question of privilege I raise, the responsibility of a member for his words is a basic principle of parliament. This principle must be enforced by

[Mr. Deputy Speaker.]

parliament; and it must be enforced I submit, sir, with or without a motion. The minister must answer for the words which he has used.

I hope, sir, that as a man of honour, as a man of integrity, he would not continue to hide behind the rules of the house, but that he would rise and detail his charges against a former prime minister of this country, charges which he made this afternoon and charges to which I refer this day at the first opportunity.

Now, sir, the despicable charges and the allegations which have been made by the minister outside the house, reflecting on the former Conservative government and upon the former prime minister today, carried by all of the nation's news media, are a matter of such importance, of such urgency that they demand immediate attention by the house.

We have witnessed today the Minister of Finance (Mr. Sharp)—

**Mr. Sharp:** Mr. Speaker, I am not an expert on the rules, but on a point of order I would just like to know whether it is in order for the hon. member to interrupt the normal business of the house in this way.

**Mr. Nielsen:** I submit to Your Honour that a point of privilege always takes precedence over any point of order. This afternoon the Minister of Finance, and others, attempted to use the rules to delay the bringing of this very important and urgent matter before the house.

**Mr. Speaker:** Order, please; I have already taken the liberty of bringing to the attention of the hon. member for Yukon that he should not impute motives, and again I bring this to his attention. The Minister of Finance (Mr. Sharp), during discussion and consideration of an item of business before the house, made a speech and no hon. member, I suggest, can impute that the speech was made for any other purpose than to enlighten the house. The hon. member should not impute motives.

**Mr. Nielsen:** Well, Mr. Speaker, anyone who was in the house this afternoon can draw his own conclusions on that matter.

That this matter is a matter of urgent public importance, and that it constitutes a dastardly reflection on every member of the former government, on members of the house who are privy councillors, and upon the Leader of the Opposition, there can be no doubt. It cannot be dealt with in any other way because the minister himself carefully