

Administration of Justice

Mr. Ricard: The minister does not know.

Mr. Caouette: Mr. Speaker, if it is merely a case of sex, it is none of parliament's business. If, on the other hand, it is a security case, then it concerns the government.

[*English*]

Mr. Churchill: I rise on a question of privilege. I heard the hon. member for Villeneuve say, or read out "another minister involved in the case". No name was given. Sir, this is a continuation of a campaign of innuendo and smear now being undertaken by the hon. member for Villeneuve. I wish to speak on this question of privilege. This is the type of thing to which we have been raising objections in the last two days. We have been raising questions of privilege because of accusations made against members of the Privy Council by the Minister of Justice at a press conference. Now, the hon. member for Villeneuve, who has told us he is accepting responsibility for statements he was reading from some newspaper article, is making accusations against members of the Privy Council without naming them.

Some hon. Members: Oh.

Mr. Churchill: The words he used were "another minister". This is on all fours with the type of question of privilege we have been raising with regard to the Minister of Justice at his press conference. This situation has reached the stage where parliament is simply being degraded.

An hon. Member: By whom?

Mr. Churchill: By members like the hon. member for Villeneuve, the Minister of Justice and others who are casting slurs and putting members of the House of Commons under suspicion.

Mr. Ricard: They are working together.

Mr. Churchill: My question of privilege affects me individually, it affects members of the House of Commons and certainly it affects all members of the Privy Council who served in an earlier government. This cannot be allowed to persist. This will bring about the destruction of parliament. That is what is happening. If members, whether on the government side or in any party in this house are to be permitted to make accusations like that without putting the name in front of the house—

An hon. Member: That is what you wanted.

Mr. Churchill:—without making a charge, we have reached the stage where we are living simply on rumour, innuendo, falsehood, smear and gossip, a stage where there is no confidence any more in this institution. This is a serious situation. That is why I am dealing with this particular question of privilege at this time.

It is an unfortunate turn of events that the hon. member for Villeneuve should join with members on the other side of the house, and particularly with the Minister of Justice, in attempting to disparage members of this house. The privileges of the house are of the greatest importance and members have always been greatly concerned when there has been any interference with, their privileges. We have heard today from many able speakers in the Conservative party about what is being done to this institution by this kind of procedure. We have heard from men who came here a few weeks ago, proud, as they should be, of the fact that they had been elected to this institution, and who then found that it had characteristics of which they were not aware. Indeed, until recently we who have been here much longer were not aware of those characteristics which downgrade this institution in the opinions of these members and of the public.

Now the hon. member for Villeneuve has added to our troubles by this accusation he has made on his own responsibility, without naming any person, but covering with a blanket of smear or innuendo the members of the Privy Council of the former administration. I feel this is something which cannot be allowed to go unchallenged. I am sure a number of my hon. friends will wish to speak on this question of privilege because we cannot, by our silence, appear to give consent to this type of attack which strikes at the very root of our system and which, if it is permitted to go on, will destroy this parliament.

Had I been speaking earlier on the other question of privilege which was before the house until a few minutes ago I would have dealt with the responsibility that rests on the Prime Minister. I did not have that opportunity. I have it now in connection with the matter raised by the hon. member for Villeneuve and I am taking advantage of it. I hope the Prime Minister of this country will intervene in an instance where members of this house are placed—

Mr. Grégoire: On a point of order.