

Privilege—Mr. Lawrence

evidence. Let us get all the evidence from all the other witnesses, and when the facts are in, if the hon. member will hold off on his motion, we will consider it at a later date.

To ask the House to form an opinion on the basis of one sentence—a scintilla, a fragment of evidence that is not yet completed, by one witness who has not yet been cross-examined, is too much to swallow. We do not intend to swallow it on this side.

You have raised, Mr. Speaker, the question of ministerial responsibility. You have said it is not a matter of procedure, it is a matter of constitutional doctrine. On that point I agree 100 per cent. We have exercised ministerial responsibility in this particular instance.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. MacEachen: We were asked, we were pleaded with, every day, by the official opposition, to establish the McDonald royal commission. First of all we said no, but then as more evidence came in we said yes, we would establish the McDonald royal commission. We were applauded by members of the official opposition, members of the New Democratic Party, and all members of the House.

Mr. Andre: Only because Quebec set up the Keable Commission.

Mr. MacEachen: We have a royal commission in progress. It is examining all the evidence. That is the way the government is discharging its responsibility. When the commission report comes in, whatever responsibility will lie on the government at that time will be discharged by the government. Certainly it is not the exercise of either the ministerial responsibility or parliamentary responsibility to find a question of privilege on one sentence by one witness contradicted by other witnesses, in testimony that is not yet complete, that has not been tested by other witnesses and that has not been the subject of cross-examination.

Mr. Lawrence: You are gagging the House.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I recognize that the hon. member for Peace River (Mr. Baldwin) is the next member to be heard, but I am not speaking to the motion. I raise a point of order which I regard as a serious one.

In the opening remarks of the Deputy Prime Minister (Mr. MacEachen) he referred to the fact that a copy of the motion had not been made available to all members. There is nothing out of the way about that. He went on to complain, however, about what he called collaboration—

Mr. MacEachen: I never used the word.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): —with the hon. member for Northumberland-Durham (Mr. Lawrence) in drafting the new motion. The implication was that the Speaker had been unfair to the government by working with the hon. member for Northumberland-Durham in drafting the revised

[Mr. MacEachen.]

motion. I suggest that what was said was a slur on the Chair which this House should not tolerate.

I would refer the House to Beauchesne's fourth edition, citation 199(1), which reads as follows:

When a member hands a motion to the Speaker after having spoken in support of it, the Speaker may, before putting the question to the House, make such corrections as are necessary or advisable in order that it should conform with the usages of the House.

I point out that when you spoke to the House on this matter—

[*Editor's Note: At this point the lights in the chamber were extinguished momentarily.*]

An hon. Member: You blew it, Stanley.

[*Later:*]

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): I indicated yesterday in another debate that in the days when there were no microphones we had to make ourselves heard by the sound of our own voices. I could have carried on in the dark, but I am sure hon. members would want to see me as well as hear me.

When Your Honour spoke on this matter on Thursday, November 9, you dealt with four or five subjects and then said, as reported in *Hansard* at page 966:

The final concern I want to leave with the House—and I freely say that it would not be looked upon by me in any case as a fatal concern—is the form of the motion. The customary form of a motion on a question of privilege is very precise and explicit, in that the matter is referred to the Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections.

There follows a rather long paragraph which I need not read in its entirety. The final sentence of that paragraph reads as follows:

However, if the motion is found to be procedurally irregular or a departure from our regular procedure, I would be sympathetic to an amendment or an alteration to the motion, if we were to carry the matter forward.

● (1642)

I submit, sir, that you made it quite clear on November 9 that some alteration to the motion might be necessary, or at least desirable. I submit that under the terms of citation 199(1) you had every right to suggest an alteration in the motion to the hon. member for Northumberland-Durham, and that it was not like the President of Privy Council to cast the slur on the Chair that he did at the beginning of his speech.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. MacEachen: Mr. Speaker, on the point of order which has been raised by the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles) as an obvious red herring in order to obscure the force of the argument I had made on the substantive motion—

Mr. Baker (Grenville-Carleton): He has laid a charge against you.

Mr. MacEachen: —I just want to say there was no slur whatsoever cast upon His Honour. I will look at the words tomorrow, and if there is any suggestion of any such slur I will