

Privilege—Mr. Bennett

SURVEY OF NATIONAL PORTS

On the orders of the day:

Hon. IAN MACKENZIE (Vancouver Centre): May I ask the Minister of Marine (Mr. Duranleau) if he is now in a position to make any announcement in regard to the intentions of the government as to implementing any or all of the provisions of the Gibb report at this session.

Hon. ALFRED DURANLEAU (Minister of Marine): Mr. Speaker, the information I can give my hon. friend is that I do not think we intend to implement that report this session.

PRIVILEGE—MR. BENNETT

On the orders of the day:

Right Hon. R. B. BENNETT (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, I rise to speak to a question of privilege affecting this house. On Thursday, April 12, the hon. member for Temiscouata (Mr. Pouliot) referred to an article appearing in a newspaper, headed:

Arthur Cutten facing charge of conspiracy alleged by United States Secretary of Agriculture to have made false reports to manipulate grain prices.

After asking the first question the hon. member said:

My second question is, did the said Cutten do anything in Canada of the kind complained of by the American government according to the dispatch I have just quoted?

This question of the hon. member is to be found at page 2067 of Hansard. A point of order was taken and considerable discussion took place, whereupon the hon. member for Temiscouata spoke as follows, as reported in the next column of the said page:

There is an obvious connection between the manipulation of grain by Cutten in Chicago and what might have been done here. We do not know what has been done here. I do not know, no one knows—

The Chairman: Order. Does the hon. gentleman speak of his personal knowledge or of what he has read?

To this inquiry the hon. member replied:

Well, most of our knowledge comes from the press, because the government does not say much.

Then there was a further statement made by the hon. member for Antigonish-Guysborough. At page 2071 the chairman said:

I understood the hon. member was going to speak on the point of order.

Then the hon. member for Antigonish-Guysborough said:

Yes, Mr. Chairman. Let me go a step further. As far as the Cutten matter is [Mr. Marcil.]

concerned, in which you intervened, Mr. Chairman, in a very courteous manner, I understand that this wheat which Cutten was selling in Chicago was sold to Mr. McFarland, and that the government was guaranteeing the money which was paying for that wheat.

Then, at page 2072:

As I said a moment ago, my only interest so far as the Cutten matter is concerned is this, that owing to the guarantee given Mr. McFarland by the government, Mr. Cutten in Chicago sold wheat to Mr. McFarland, and he had to use money for the guarantee which the dominion gave to him. In making that statement I think I have said sufficient for my purpose.

That was a direct and positive statement. Then, later at page 2074, the following statement was made by myself:

There is just one observation which the hon. member made which I submit to the committee is a very serious one. He has alleged that in consequence of something that appears in the newspapers there was collusion—that is what it amounts to—between the cooperative wheat sellers' organization and Mr. Cutten at Chicago and that money was used by Canadians for the purpose of buying Mr. Cutten's wheat.

Mr. Duff: If the Prime Minister will allow me, I said that there was a report.

Mr. Bennett: Any man who in parliament makes a statement of that kind must accept the responsibility for making it.

That is the direct statement, which will be recalled. Then the hon. member for Antigonish-Guysborough said, "I am willing to accept it."

I cabled Mr. McFarland the sense of the statement thus made and I have just received an answer, as follows:

Replying your telegram, never directly or indirectly, either for myself or for any person, corporation or government, have I had any business transactions in wheat or other commodities with Arthur Cutten either in Chicago, Winnipeg or elsewhere.

McFarland.

I mention that, Mr. Speaker, because the statement, in the first instance, was a very direct one, and later it was said to have been only a report. I do think that the privileges of this house have been violated by a statement of that positive character being made with respect to one who was discharging the duties that he was, and whose contradiction is unequivocal and certain.

Mr. LAPOINTE: I believe it is against the rules of the house to quote statements from outsiders in reply to statements made by hon. members of this house.

Mr. BENNETT: That is true, Mr. Speaker, but when it involves a question of a witness who was brought by a committee of this house before it, and a statement of that kind