

Question of Privilege

Mr. Speaker, the motion of the member for Edmonton-Strathcona could have been introduced against several other members of the press gallery, against anyone in the house, in order to call them before the committee on privileges and elections. If we spent our time bringing up articles written or opinions expressed by journalists against us, the committee on privileges and elections would be summoning journalists all day long and even all year round, especially as far as we are concerned, we, members of the Ralliement Créditiste.

Mr. Speaker, I think the motion of the hon. member is not serious. On the other hand, I believe that journalists are the first to flout the freedom of the press, because instead of complying with that freedom, they indulge in licence of the press, which is entirely different.

An opinion can be stated, as long as it is pointed out that it is one's opinion, but to misquote knowingly someone, Mr. Speaker, is no longer freedom of the press. From that point of view I would accept the motion of the member for Edmonton-Strathcona, but as we complain that freedom is often violated—and by the way, especially as far as we are concerned—I think that this motion should be ruled out of order, because as I said earlier, we could introduce similar motions each day against any reporter or owner of a Canadian newspaper.

Mr. Speaker, for those reasons and considerations I think that the member for Edmonton-Strathcona should be a little more lenient and simply withdraw his motion in order not to make a point of conscience out of it.

Hon. Marcel Lambert (Edmonton West): Mr. Speaker, first of all I would like to suggest to the hon. member for Villeneuve to consult his deskmate, the hon. member for Mégantic (Mr. Langlois) who, in November 1962, found himself forced to refer to the house, and then to the committee on privileges and elections, an article published in some newspapers, as well as the editorial of a certain newspaper, about a parliamentary delegation because he had been offended. And strangely enough the seconder of the motion was none other than the present Minister of National Defence (Mr. Hellyer). At that time not a single objection was raised. The question was that the house itself could not discuss the pros and cons of the article.

We have a committee on privileges and elections which can study the matter, hear testimony and then report to the house which, then, will reach a decision. That is all we are asking for at this time; it is not for the Chair to decide if an article offends an hon. member or violates his privileges. It must only establish a prima facie case.

And I suggest to Your Honour that, in the circumstances, there is not much difference between the editorial about which we are complaining and that of 1962. It is unfortunate that at that time we did not get a decision or at least a recommendation, but other events stole the limelight from the investigation on that editorial.

Therefore, with all due respect, I suggest to Your Honour that the editorial and the complaints be referred to the committee on privileges and elections for study and report, after which we will be able to decide what to do.

Mr. Caouette: Will the hon. member allow me a question?

Mr. Lambert: Yes, of course.

Mr. Caouette: Was the matter raised by the hon. member for Edmonton West in 1962 referred to the committee on privileges and elections at that time?

Mr. Lambert: As far as I remember, Mr. Speaker, yes, the motion was agreed to by the house without discussion. That matter had been referred to the committee but there were then several questions before it, and then general elections were held quite soon after.

I think that the hon. member and his colleagues were involved in some discussions on a matter which had also been referred to the committee.

Mr. Caouette: Mr. Speaker—

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. member for Saint-Hyacinthe-Bagot.

Hon. Théogène Ricard (Saint-Hyacinthe-Bagot): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member for Villeneuve tried in his few remarks to give the impression that one Conservative member was trying to discredit the French Canadians.

I am myself a French Canadian, Mr. Speaker, and it is as such that I would like to make a few remarks.

Besides being a French Canadian, I am a Conservative member from Quebec. And it is as—