

Supply—National Defence

supporters is so large that they overflow the seats which are available on your right and take over a portion of the seats on your left. But the fact remains that members of parliament of the various parties face each other. In many other assemblies there is a semi-circular seating arrangement, which undoubtedly enables the chairman to maintain greater control over the various members who may speak from time to time. No doubt there are advantages in both systems.

Under our arrangement, those who are seated opposite to the government must of necessity see some of the movements that are carried out between members of the government. Seated here opposite the government benches, although perhaps my head may have been lowered by the realization that we are a small minority, I could not help seeing movements which were carried out on the other side of the house about an hour ago. I could not help seeing the Minister of National Defence rise from his seat, walk over to the hon. member for Temiscouata and ask him to provide some comic relief—

Mr. Claxton: Mr. Chairman, —

Mr. Pearkes: I have the floor, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Claxton: I rise on a question of privilege, Mr. Chairman. There is not a word of truth in what the hon. gentleman says; and I ask the hon. member for Temiscouata to confirm what I have said. I also think that this is a most improper remark to be made by one member about another.

An hon. Member: Not at all.

Mr. Ross (Souris): The minister certainly was improper.

Mr. Pouliot: I rise on a question of privilege, Mr. Chairman, and I will say that the Minister of National Defence did not say a word to me of that kind.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Pouliot: I asked him a question.

An hon. Member: What did he go over there for?

Mr. Pouliot: I will tell you what question I asked him. I asked him if the leader of the opposition had asked him a question about the detail of the item in the estimates, and he said no. I did not say a word besides that to the Minister of National Defence from the time the sitting commenced at eight o'clock tonight. I protest strongly against the unwarranted, untimely, uncalled for and untrue statement of the hon. member for Nanaimo.

Mr. Pearkes: Of course it is quite impossible for me, Mr. Chairman, to know what the conversation was.

[Mr. Pearkes.]

Mr. Claxton: On a question of privilege, Mr. Chairman—

Some hon. Members: Sit down.

The Deputy Chairman: Order. Two hon. members cannot be on their feet at the same time. When the chairman rises, hon. members must resume their seats. The hon. member for Nanaimo has made a statement. If I recall it correctly, it was that he had seen the Minister of National Defence go over, talk to the hon. member for Temiscouata, and ask him "to provide comic relief".

Mr. Pouliot: A shameful suggestion.

The Deputy Chairman: The Minister of National Defence rose to a question of privilege, said that the statement made by the hon. member for Nanaimo was untrue, and asked the hon. member for Temiscouata to confirm what he had said. The hon. member for Temiscouata rose on a question of privilege and also said that the statement made by the hon. member for Nanaimo was not correct. In the circumstances, I think there is a simple way of putting an end to the discussion of this point of privilege, that is to follow the practice and the rule of procedure in this chamber and accept the statement made by the Minister of National Defence and the statement made by the hon. member for Temiscouata. I would expect the hon. member for Nanaimo to do precisely that.

Mr. Pearkes: Mr. Chairman, I am pleased to admit that it was quite impossible for me to hear what the conversation was.

Mr. Claxton: Oh, no, Mr. Chairman—

Mr. Drew: Sit down.

Mr. Claxton: I rise to a question of privilege, and I ask that the hon. gentleman be asked—

Some hon. Members: Sit down.

Mr. Claxton: —be ordered to withdraw his statement.

Mr. Pearkes: Mr. Chairman, I repeat that I admit quite frankly it was impossible for me to hear what the Minister of National Defence said to the hon. member for Temiscouata. I drew conclusions. If these conclusions are wrong I frankly withdraw the statement which I made, in which I accused the Minister of National Defence of having asked the hon. member for Temiscouata to provide the comic relief; but the fact remains that the Minister of National Defence did walk over to and did have conversation with the hon. member for Temiscouata, and the hon. member for Temiscouata did provide the comic relief at that time.