

Question of Privilege

as well as the reply given by the Minister of Public Works or his parliamentary secretary in this respect and related documents, be submitted to the standing committee on public accounts.

I was therefore asking the house to submit the transaction to the committee on public accounts. Another reason which prompted me to do so is that the treasury board agreed to make that payment of \$16,000, as proved by the contract entered into on September 26, 1961, under its minute number 581250, dated May 18, 1961, whereas Mr. Giguere became the owner of the land on May 24 only, that is after the treasury board had accepted to pay the amount of \$16,000.

Consequently, that transaction enabled Mr. Giguere to make a profit of \$8,000.

(Text):

Mr. Speaker: The hon. member for Beauce has raised a question relating to an answer given by the Minister of Public Works upon which the minister has had an opportunity to comment. He raises this matter as a question of privilege and submits a motion that the acquisition of the property be referred to the committee on public accounts. If there is a question of the privileges of the house involved, then the hon. member is within his rights in making a motion and insisting that the question of privilege, as must be done with any question of privilege, be disposed of at once.

If a matter of the privileges of the house is not involved then the hon. member's remedy is to give notice of his motion on the order paper, as any unofficial member of the house would do, or to take the matter to the public accounts committee and ask that committee to consider the question which he wishes them to consider.

On the last occasion the question was raised I indicated to the hon. member that I did not think a matter of privilege would arise unless he were prepared to assert, on his own responsibility, that the house had been deliberately misinformed by the minister, thereby incurring some impropriety or improper conduct to the minister which would raise a question of the privileges of the house. As he has not asserted this, I do not find that there is a question of privilege involved. The matter has been discussed, hon. members of the house can form their own conclusions and, as I stated, the hon. member has another remedy to bring his question before the public accounts committee.

Hon. Lionel Chevrier (Laurier): Would Your Honour listen to what I have to say in connection with the matter? Your Honour has disposed of it apparently on the basis that there is just one item involved in this question, namely the error in the return to the house made by the minister; but I think Your

Honour forgets the point which was raised by my hon. friend from Beauce when the matter was first raised, namely that there was a question of an option for \$16,000 having been taken on a property which just prior thereto had been purchased for \$8,000.

Surely that is a matter which affects the privileges of all hon. members of the house, and surely it is a matter which the public accounts committee might properly be charged with. Otherwise an hon. member would have no recourse under the circumstances if the motion were to go the bottom of the list. I simply bring to Your Honour's attention, if I may, that treasury board had approved on the 18th day of May—

Mr. Speaker: Order. I think the hon. member need not go into the facts. I take the view that in the absence of some charge against the minister which would necessarily involve the privileges of the house, the other facts, while they may disclose something which deserves inquiry and attention, are not of the order of those situations which involve the conduct of a minister vis-à-vis the house. Therefore they must be inquired into in the usual way, either on the estimates of the minister's department, by bringing the matter before the public accounts committee, or by the other remedies and opportunities that are available to private members to bring to the attention of the house or its committees matters which they feel deserve that attention.

I think it would be very dangerous to set the precedent that any hon. member of the house could rise in his place at any time without notice and move that certain matters be considered by the house or by committees of the house, unless they genuinely involve known and established privileges of the house.

Mr. Chevrier: Mr. Speaker, may I be allowed to make two points in connection with what Your Honour has said. The first has to do with the matter which the minister himself has raised, namely that he said at the outset that he had absolutely no objection to the matter being referred to the public accounts committee. I should think the minister would be the first to want to clear this up in so far as the particular individual in question, Mr. Giguere, is concerned. The next point is that Your Honour has suggested this matter might well be disposed of on another occasion when the estimates of the Department of Public Works are up for consideration. There is certainly at this time, under these circumstances, no knowledge in so far as we are concerned that these will ever be reached,

[Mr. Racine.]