

allow it to stand in view of the fact that an enquiry is about to be made in a very short time.

Mr. EDGAR. The Minister of Public Works referred to English precedent, and he said that every accused person should be assumed to be innocent until he is proved guilty. That is all right; but you cannot ignore in this House, and the country will not ignore, a statement made on the floor of this House on the responsibility of an hon. member charging an officer of the Department of Public Works, whose salary we are now asked to vote, with highly improper conduct. I do not think it would have been an un-English precedent for the Minister of Public Works, in the face of these charges, to suspend this officer from his functions; not to dismiss the officer and say he is guilty, but to say: "In the face of this charge, which will be settled in one way or the other in a very short time, you will be suspended until this case is decided." If the Minister of Public Works had looked a little further into British precedents he would have found out that whenever a Minister of the Crown is charged, as he is charged to-day, with a gross offence, which if it is proved would have the most serious consequences to himself and his colleagues, I say that if he looks at British precedents he will find that in no case has a Minister who has charges like that hanging over his head continued in office until a decision on the accusations was arrived at. If the Minister of Public Works were to follow British precedents I am perfectly satisfied that his course would be to say to his colleagues: I am innocent, I will stand aside, I will vindicate my public character and I will not drag my colleagues down with me if I fail to do so; and if I am innocent, as I claim to be, I will come back to my place with increased honour and reputation. That is the position which I think the hon. Minister should take; and I am not surprised, when he remains where he is, that he does not think it proper to suspend Mr. Perley.

Sir JOHN A. MACDONALD. It is greatly to be regretted that on this ordinary item, which appears in the Estimates every year, the House should be drawn into a discussion of a matter which is of very considerable importance, but which is altogether irrelevant to the vote now before the Committee. There is such an officer as the Chief Engineer of Public Works; we must always have such an officer; and this vote is for the salary of the person who will be Chief Engineer from and after the 1st July next until the 1st of July, 1892. The vote is not necessarily for Mr. Perley; it is for the person on whom the Crown may confer the office of Chief Engineer on the 1st of July next. So that all this discussion is irrelevant; and after these charges have been relegated to the Committee on Privileges and Elections, it is unfortunate that we should be induced by feeling or otherwise to extend the scope of this discussion; and I may say, Mr. Chairman, that it would be quite within your jurisdiction if you were to put an end to a discussion so irrelevant. One would suppose that some hon. members have a pleasure in attacking their fellow members. I regret that any cause for reference to the proceedings of a committee should have arisen. I speak thus because I think it is well that we should keep the two subjects altogether separate. Now that the matter has gone to the Committee on Privileges and Elections, I hope it will be pressed, as it ought

to be pressed, to a thorough investigation, and that we may free our minds of the subject in this House until it is dealt with by the tribunal to which it has been relegated.

Mr. DAVIES (P.E.I.) What the right hon. Prime Minister says is no doubt perfectly true, that the House is not called on to vote the salary to Mr. Perley, one of the incriminated parties in the charges brought by an hon. member; but at the same time we cannot ignore the fact that the gentleman so charged holds the position to which the salary we are now voting is attached. Therefore it seems eminently proper that we should ask whether it is right that the party or parties against whom these charges have been made on the responsibility of a member of Parliament should continue to hold the responsible positions they do while the charges are pending. There is no doubt of the truth of the remark that the right hon. First Minister has made, that these charges should be brought to a speedy trial. There is no doubt, on the other hand, that if the hon. Minister of Public Works had felt it right for the time being to resign the responsible position he holds, and to resign to another member of the Government the custody of the documents which the hon. gentleman making the charges has asked for, he would perhaps have been consulting his own self-respect and the wishes of the members of this House; but he has not seen fit to do so. On that point a great deal rests with himself; but on the point now before us, I think the House is entitled to receive more information from the hon. gentleman. Are we to have these matters burked or not? Is the investigation to be delayed from day to day, or not? The hon. gentleman who made the charges moved, on the first day the Committee met, for certain papers which he said he required in support of one or all of those charges; he stated that it would be impossible for him to proceed with the oral testimony until he had the official documents in the Department of Public Works. I should have supposed that all the other work of the Department, not absolutely necessary in the public interest, would have been delayed until all these documents had been collected and presented to the committee. I should have supposed that the urgency of the case would have presented itself to the mind of the hon. Minister himself, and that he would have given directions that other matters should be in the meantime laid aside, in order that these documents should be brought down to the committee at the earliest possible moment. If these gentlemen are innocent, in God's name let it be proved so, and let it be proved quickly; if they are guilty, it is necessary in the public interest that they should be removed from the responsible positions they hold. As the hon. First Minister says, this matter should be brought to a speedy issue, and before the proper tribunal; and it is to be regretted that the delays occasioned by the Public Works Department should necessitate the matter being brought up here. Holding as I do the position of a member of the committee, I shall try to keep my mind clear in the matter—

Some hon. MEMBERS. Hear, hear.

Mr. DAVIES (P.E.I.) I hope so. Some hon. gentlemen cheer; I hope it is in support of the honourable position I take on this matter; but, in trying to hold my mind clear, I think I am safe in