

Motion for Adjournment

which the house should concern itself; yet the discussion this afternoon was about something of the utmost seriousness, the very type of thing with which the house should concern itself.

● (4:20 p.m.)

Mr. Douglas: Mr. Speaker, in answer to that question, from listening to the hon. member for Edmonton-Strathcona I understood him to charge that a minister of the crown had tampered with the evidence of a witness who appeared before a committee of this house. I do not think that we should have any part in helping the hon. member to draft his motion. If the member has a charge to make, let him move his motion. If the house thinks that the speech he makes in support of that motion contains sufficient information to warrant an investigation by the committee on privileges and elections, then it can pass the motion. If after listening to the hon. member the house does not feel that he has sufficient evidence to warrant referring the matter to that committee, it can refuse to pass the motion. But I do not think it is our responsibility to start drafting such a motion or to find out from the hon. member what is in his motion before he is allowed to move it.

According to the rules of the house, the moment the Speaker says that there is a prima facie case for moving a motion of privilege the hon. member has the right to move it without anybody knowing what is in the motion. All I am suggesting is that the hon. member be given that right and be given it with unanimous consent.

Mr. Eric A. Winkler (Grey-Bruce): Mr. Speaker, I will be very brief. In recalling the events of the afternoon I think that had we started with the understanding we have now reached the very course which is about to take place would have been followed. I have no idea what the hon. member's statement is going to be, but I believe he is prepared to move his motion and to present the evidence which will be before the house and before the committee.

May I recall to the house the words of the minister in recounting that this matter has been public knowledge for a long time. If it had not been for the members of the press gallery, we would not have known in July what had taken place. Only now has the member been able to produce the evidence. I would appreciate very much his being given the opportunity to move his motion, and then the committee can deal with the matter as they desire.

[Mr. McIlraith.]

Mr. Olson: Mr. Speaker, there is a significant difference between what the hon. member for Burnaby-Coquitlam is suggesting the house should do and what has been suggested by the Prime Minister and the Minister of National Defence. What they suggested was that if they could see the motion they would undertake to proceed with it at once and refer the matter either to the defence committee or to the committee on privileges and elections for consideration. That, Mr. Speaker, requires unanimous consent.

The procedure suggested by the hon. member for Burnaby-Coquitlam when he says that the hon. member has the exclusive right to draw up the charge and to lay the charge he wants to make is predicated upon whether or not he can do it in such a way as to establish a prima facie case. If he can then it is, of course, his exclusive right to move his motion. But that does not mean he has the assurance that he will receive unanimous consent to send the matter to a committee.

Therefore, Mr. Speaker, I suggest that there is a distinct difference between accepting a motion from the hon. member for which he alone takes full responsibility, with unanimous consent being given to send it to a committee, and the other course of action wherein he would first of all have to establish a prima facie case in order to put the motion before the house. In addition, having listened to his argument members of this house would not necessarily give him unanimous consent but would be given the opportunity of voting on whether or not the motion should be referred to the committee. Therefore, Mr. Speaker, because the consequences of this matter are of such serious nature we have to be careful that we do not confuse what can be done by unanimous consent and what can be done in the normal course under the rules of this house.

Mr. Nugent: Mr. Speaker, I think I can clear up a couple of misunderstandings, particularly the misunderstanding of the hon. member for Medicine Hat and the matter raised by the Minister of Public Works.

First, as to the charge the word "tamper" is used because it is the word in citation 308 of Beauchesne, the rule which I am accusing the minister of transgressing. I am using the exact word used in the rule because I thought there was no surer way of having precision in the charge.

If it would help, Mr. Speaker, may I say I have looked up the word "tamper" in the