

Administration of Justice

The hon. member for Cape Breton South (Mr. MacInnis) has no right to say in the house that admissions were made by the ministers who, at the time, answered the charges laid by a member of the Conservative party.

On the contrary, it will be seen, by referring to *Hansard* of that day, that I categorically denied there was anything improper in the transactions. In any case, when I handed my resignation to the Prime Minister, I pointed out that I was taking the same stand I had taken at the time, to the effect that there was nothing improper in those transactions and that they had nothing to do with my resignation and I would ask the hon. member to withdraw his words, because there never was any admission and I am still convinced that the transaction was normal.

[*English*]

Mr. MacInnis (Cape Breton South): I am not going to dispute the words of the former—

Some hon. Members: Withdraw.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. MacInnis (Cape Breton South): I have no intention of disputing the words of the former minister. I referred to the fact that all this took place after a question appeared on the order paper. The former minister has given his reasons and I accept them. But it does not stand up to the statement made by the Prime Minister this morning when he brought up the question of the furniture deal and referred to us on this side of the house as character assassins. It was not I or any member on this side of the house who ran to the press after that question appeared on the order paper and confessed to the fact that we were involved with bankrupt furniture companies. The minister did not resign for that reason, and I withdraw my statement.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. I should like to suggest to all hon. members who take part in this debate that they should try to limit their comments to the question of privilege which has been submitted to the Chair and is being considered at the moment.

Mr. MacInnis (Cape Breton South): Having arrived in this house in the same way as all hon. members on that side of the chamber, through the procedure of a vote in my riding, I feel I am privileged to make statements in respect of furniture, in respect of Hal Banks, in respect of Doyle, in respect of Rivard,

[*Mr. Tremblay.*]

Dorion and everybody else in the same way as the minister was given that privilege earlier today.

The former minister claims he did not resign because of the furniture deals. Why, then, did the Prime Minister bring that question up this morning? Why did he bring out this morning the suggestion that there were character assassins on this side of the house because of the furniture deals? Those were the Prime Minister's own words.

I referred to the defence put up last week by the Prime Minister in respect of the Minister of Justice, which defence was unacceptable to himself in the long run. The defence that has been put up today is a very weak one. There are many members of the Privy Council on the other side of the house and not all of them, because they recognize this situation for what it is, have stood up to defend the Minister of Justice. There is no justice in defending a minister who has made a blanket charge which refers to so many members of the house. I am not a lawyer and am not in a position to deal with what is justice in this country but the action of the Minister of Justice is, according to my understanding, a complete reversal of the principles of justice. It is my understanding that under our system of British justice you are innocent until proven guilty. But the position in which this government has placed former members of the Privy Council is this: You are all guilty until you come forward and prove yourselves innocent. This is exactly what the government is trying to do today in its feeble and unacceptable defence of a minister who should do what he intended to do last week and resign. I suggest that the next time the Prime Minister gets a letter from the Minister of Justice he should open it and take action on it.

● (2:50 p.m.)

Mr. K. H. More (Regina City): Mr. Speaker, I shall speak without provocation and without too much passion on this matter. I am not going to preface my remarks by saying I have a great regard for the Minister of Justice (Mr. Cardin). I have had no regard for him since a speech he made in this house back in 1962.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. More: I have lately re-read that speech twice. I will not bandy around such niceties at this time. It seems to me, sir, that we have had a great many lawyers participating in the motions and speeches before the house. I am