

Handling of House Business

reflecting on Your Honour's decision but on the decision made by the government to bring it in—one will see that not that much time has been spent on it by the House.

Mr. Woolliams: It is just a salary raise for the Liberals.

Mr. Baldwin: Mr. Speaker, the House Leaders attempt as best they can to deal with difficult problems and operate through the usual channels to try to facilitate the business of the House. I will not go into the details of the meetings of House Leaders. Nevertheless, discussions took place not so long ago, and I will be corroborated in this statement by the House Leaders of the other parties, with regard to ways and means of working out a timetable and schedule and, if necessary, a possible House order with regard to the government organization bill. In light of the statements made by the right hon. gentleman, how can meetings of this type possibly continue to function? In view of the Prime Minister's statements, how can it be reasonably expected that members of the opposition parties will try to work out a form of timetable and a reasonable schedule for dealing with an important matter of this kind?

If the Prime Minister spent more time here he would realize that when legislation is introduced which in part or in whole is obnoxious and repugnant to the opposition parties, those parties would be derelict in their duty if they did not oppose that legislation vigorously, actively and, if necessary, to the point of arousing public opinion. If the representations of public opinion which I see, hear and read about in respect of the government organization bill are accurate, then I submit that the Prime Minister is very much in error if he thinks that there is a great demand on the part of the people of this country for passage of the government organization bill.

Mr. Woolliams: The Liberals want to increase their own salaries.

Mr. Baldwin: I do not intend to say any more. I simply want to quote to Your Honour from Erskine May's Parliamentary Practice, Seventeenth Edition, pages 118 and 119:

—breach of privilege by speaking words defamatory of either House or its proceedings,—

Analogous to the publication of libels upon either House is the publication of false or perverted, or of partial and injurious reports of debates or proceedings of either House or committees of either House—

At page 119, there is a list of cases, which are well-known to Your Honour, in proof of this comment. There is a repetition at page 124:

Analogous to molestation of members on account of their behaviour in Parliament are speeches and writings reflecting upon their conduct as members.

Anything which constitutes a contempt in a court of law must be considered as a breach of the privileges of the House. I am not going to make a motion, Mr. Speaker. I think Your Honour has ruled in the past that while matters of this kind raise a proper point of privilege,

[Mr. Baldwin.]

they are not points of privilege which can be the subject of a motion. However, I submit to Your Honour and to hon. members that the kind of conduct of the Prime Minister yesterday, whether committed on bad advice, in ignorance or bad temper, is not the kind of conduct which is conducive to the passage of legislation in this House and to the good conduct of the proceedings of this institution.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Speaker: As indicated by the hon. member for Peace River, similar notices were filed with the Chair by the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre and the hon. member for Lotbinière. Rather than having three separate and extended debates on the same subject, it might be more appropriate if we heard as briefly as possible from the hon. members who have filed similar notices, the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre and the hon. member for Lotbinière.

Mr. Stanley Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): As already indicated by Your Honour, I gave you notice this morning under Standing Order 17(2) that I wished to raise a question of privilege. I do so in concert with the hon. member for Peace River (Mr. Baldwin) and the hon. member for Lotbinière (Mr. Fortin). I indicated in my notice to Your Honour that the point of privilege that prompts me to rise to my feet is the fact that statements made outside the House of Commons by the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) have the effect of interfering with my role as one of the House Leaders and of interfering with the role of the four House Leaders collectively, and therefore these statements are damaging to the progress of business in the House of Commons.

I do not rise in anger, or with any thought of trying to return blow for blow or to castigate the other side, but to make an earnest plea. I make this plea on behalf of Parliament. I believe that this is a tremendous institution and that it can continue to do a job for the people of Canada. My plea is that it be permitted to do so without remarks of contempt and derision that destroy the good will necessary for the work of this House of Commons. As I have already said, and I shall endeavour to stick to my statement, I do not wish to return blow for blow or to castigate the Prime Minister, but I do make a plea to him to make a real effort to understand this place and to give it an opportunity to function as I believe it can.

● (11:20 a.m.)

I have said that the nub of my question of privilege is that statements such as were made outside the House yesterday constitute an interference with the work of the House which has been entrusted to the four House Leaders. I point out that this very morning, when we get past the question period, the report stage and third reading of two separate bills will be called. One has to do with the Canada-Jamaica tax agreement and the other has to do with crop insurance. In both these cases we reached agreement yesterday that there would be no debate at