

Motion for Adjournment

going to survive we must have some examination of this major issue so that the members of this house may know that evidence given in committee is untrammelled and free from prejudice and pressure.

Mr. G. L. Chatterton (Esquimalt-Saanich): Mr. Speaker, may I say just a few words in support of the motion. A most important and serious charge has been made in this house that a minister of the crown has tampered with evidence given before a committee of this house. The question is not whether the charge is correct or can be proven. The charge has been made and this is the situation which faces the house now. It seems to me that the first person who should support this motion is the Minister of National Defence. Surely the minister would want the opportunity in this house today and not tomorrow to reply to this serious charge.

Mr. J. M. Forrestall (Halifax): Mr. Speaker, I should like to support the motion of the hon. member for Edmonton-Strathcona. I would ask Mr. Speaker to take into consideration fully the complete relationship to committee discussions in the future of any witness who may appear before any committee so long as the present situation is left unanswered. The urgency of the matter has been dealt with by the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre in his suggestion that there is very little time left in the house this afternoon.

In the light of these things, particularly the grievous nature of the charge against the minister, which is one in respect of which I join with the hon. member, I would urge that Your Honour give every consideration to allowing this motion to be put to the house.

Hon. Paul Hellyer (Minister of National Defence): Mr. Speaker, obviously no one is more interested than I in having these slanderous insinuations dealt with in a proper fashion and in a proper forum.

Mr. Nugent: Then ask for unanimous consent to do it.

Mr. Hellyer: This suggestion that we—

Mr. Forrestall: Mr. Speaker, on a point of personal privilege I ask the Minister of National Defence to withdraw that statement.

Mr. Hellyer: No, I will not, Mr. Speaker. They are slanderous insinuations; that is all they are.

Mr. Forrestall: They are the truth.

[Mr. Baldwin.]

Mr. Hellyer: They are not. They should be dealt with in a proper way at the proper time, and no one is more in favour of this than I am. A debate this afternoon in this house is not the proper time. It is clear that the object of this exercise is merely to frustrate the business planned for this afternoon. It is an old Tory game and some of us are getting a little tired of it.

Mr. Nugent: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a question of privilege.

Mr. Hellyer: Mr. Speaker—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The hon. member for Edmonton-Strathcona on a question of privilege. Before I recognize the hon. member I should like to remind hon. members taking part in this discussion that what they are to consider, for the guidance of the Chair, is the question of urgency of debate.

Mr. Nugent: Mr. Speaker, the minister has just suggested I have brought up a matter simply to impede the business of the house. That is imputing a motive and a very low one to a member who has been very careful in this regard to make sure that he had the proof and had personally investigated the evidence leading to this charge. I suggest that the minister is imputing motives and is also insulting the house by suggesting that a charge that he has interfered with a witness is not important. It is more important business than the other. It may be unimportant to the minister whether a witness tells the truth—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

● (3:40 p.m.)

Mr. Hellyer: Mr. Speaker, I was speaking on the question of urgency at the time I was interrupted by my hon. friend. I was going to suggest, in view of the fact that some months have passed since this alleged situation occurred, that the proper place to debate this matter is before the standing committee on national defence following the introduction of the legislation, and that suggestion has been made before.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Hellyer: I make that suggestion because I do not think the alleged facts as presented here today can be separated from other facts and questions that will no doubt be considered at the time that committee meets. I think this matter should be considered in a forum where—