

## HOUSE OF COMMONS

Tuesday, May 19, 1970

The House met at 2 p.m.

### PRIVILEGE

MR. HOWARD (OKANAGAN BOUNDARY)—INTERPRETATION OF DEBATE BY THOMSON NEWSPAPER COLUMNIST

**Mr. Bruce Howard (Okanagan Boundary):** Mr. Speaker, I rise on a question of privilege. On Monday, May 4, this House debated a motion by the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles). In referring to events of that date, I wish to state that certain newspaper accounts of the debate have just been brought to my attention and for that reason I was not able to raise the question until today.

As Your Honour will recall, the debate on that day was on the subject of considering increased old age and veterans pensions. The motion called for "an immediate and substantial increase in the basic amount of old age security pensions and in veterans pensions." In preliminary discussion of the motion Your Honour ruled that the motion was a no-confidence motion in the government. In other words, the debate became a matter of procedure. If the motion had carried, Parliament would have been dissolved at once and the country would have had to spend millions of dollars on an election. More than that, there would not have been a government in office to bring in the pension increases proposed by the motion.

**Mr. Baldwin:** There is no government now.

**Mr. Howard (Okanagan Boundary):** Your Honour knew that under Standing Order 58(9) the motion was a no-confidence motion in the government. All members of this House and all members of the Press Gallery knew that, but the people back home did not know it.

**Mr. Hees:** They know you are against raising pensions.

**Mr. Howard (Okanagan Boundary):** One member of the Press Gallery, whose words are carried in 42 newspapers across Canada, used that lack of public knowledge of the

rules of parliamentary debate as the basis for a monumental distortion of events as they occurred in the House. His words appeared in various newspapers between May 9 and May 12.

The newspaper article I cite was written by Patrick Nicholson of the Thomson newspaper chain. The distortions and inaccuracies of that column are typical of many of the columns that he writes in 42 Thomson newspapers across Canada. This is a situation that grows more alarming with every new purchase by the Thomson newspaper chain.

In all fairness I want to make it clear that I am not referring to the hard news that is carried in the Thomson newspapers. In my view hard news as reported by the Thomson staff is generally fair and accurate. What I am referring to is the daily ration of distorted and inaccurate interpretations of events in Ottawa carried in the column "Ottawa Report" by Patrick Nicholson.

The world today feeds on news. We depend on newsmen to tell us accurately and honestly about the events of the day. In a time when riot, war and demonstrations are the daily fare, we become doubly conscious of the power of the written word to calm or to incite, to build or destroy the nation. If we are to survive the difficult days ahead we need a strong and a free press. But we need journalists with higher standards of responsibility—

**Mr. Speaker:** Order, please. I have to interrupt the hon. member to ask him to indicate in what way he thinks this is a question of privilege. If the hon. member has a motion, he should indicate what motion he has in mind. He has now had the floor for a few minutes. The hon. member owes it to the Chair and hon. members to indicate as quickly as possibly the question of privilege.

**Mr. Howard (Okanagan Boundary):** I intend to move a motion, Mr. Speaker. I can finish with just one more paragraph.

**Mr. Hees:** That is one too many. Let us have the motion now.

**Mr. Howard (Okanagan Boundary):** With each new purchase of an independent newspaper in Canada by the Thomson chain, the