

Privilege

In my particular case, according to External Affairs, my expenses in respect of that week amounted to \$2,183. So, as one can see, it is not even a question of a misplaced decimal.

I ask, through you, Mr. Speaker, for a public apology, and I ask that the correct figure be printed in *Hansard* as soon as possible.

Mr. Speaker: Before hearing from the Hon. Parliamentary Secretary to Deputy Prime Minister and President of the Privy Council (Mr. Lewis), let me just observe that it is regrettable that this error has taken place. It is something that may have stemmed from over-enthusiastic investigative reporting.

In any event, we shall hear from the Hon. Parliamentary Secretary to Deputy Prime Minister and President of the Privy Council on the matter.

Mr. Doug Lewis (Parliamentary Secretary to Deputy Prime Minister and President of the Privy Council): Mr. Speaker, I agree with my colleague that a serious mistake has indeed been made. On behalf of the Government, I rise to admit that an administrative error has been made, in respect of which I offer our sincere apologies to my colleague.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Lewis: I am advised that the correct amount is indeed \$2,183. At the present time, I have no idea as to how such an error could have been made. The fact that a great number of figures are provided without error does not make any less grievous this particular mistake.

We regret that it has caused the Hon. Member and his family embarrassment, not to mention the time involved in straightening the matter out. Given my personal friendship with the Hon. Member for Cape Breton—The Sydneys (Mr. MacLellan), I am particularly regretful that this error occurred. I can tell the Hon. Member that I expect to have the official correction ready for tabling tomorrow; or if not then, at the first available opportunity.

Mr. Speaker: I want to thank the Hon. Parliamentary Secretary for his response. I trust that the response given will completely satisfy the Hon. Member for Cape Breton—the Sydneys as well as his family and his constituents.

* * *

PRIVILEGE

ALLEGED LEAKS OF INFORMATION FROM *IN CAMERA*
COMMITTEE MEETINGS—MR. SPEAKER'S RULING

Mr. Speaker: I am now ready to rule on the question of privilege raised by the Hon. Member for Selkirk—Interlake (Mr. Holtmann) on April 28 and May 5, as well as the question of privilege raised by the Hon. Member for Calgary South (Mrs. Sparrow) yesterday, May 13.

I will first briefly recapitulate the sequence of events underlying the first question of privilege, as I understand them.

For the benefit of those Hon. Members who were unable to be here yesterday, as well as the public, let me say that this ruling relates to alleged leaks of information from committee meetings held *in camera*; that is to say, in absolute privacy.

There have been several incidents over the last few months involving such leaks brought to the attention of the Chair. The Chair considers such leaks a very serious matter.

As was pointed out by the Hon. Parliamentary Secretary to Deputy Prime Minister and the President of the Privy Council (Mr. Lewis) a few days ago, when this place operates at its best, it operates on the basis of mutual trust. When Hon. Members take part in what is an *in camera* meeting—and it is not for the Chair to say when and under what circumstances such meetings are held; that is a decision for the respective committees—they have to be assured that what takes place in confidence will be held in confidence.

That, I am sure, is a sentiment shared by all Hon. Members, and it is that which the Chair intends to address in its ruling. I invite all Hon. Members, some of whom were unable to be here when the arguments were given, to reflect upon that, and I also want the public watching the proceedings of this place to understand exactly what it is the ruling relates to.

To briefly recapitulate the sequence of events, on March 24 last the Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development met *in camera* to consider a draft report to the House. The committee resolved—and remember, the committee was *in camera*—following a recorded vote, not to report the draft report to the House at that time.

On the following day, the Hon. Member for Kenora—Rainy River (Mr. Parry), a distinguished member of that particular committee, and an individual for whom Hon. Members have a high regard, made a statement under Standing Order 21 criticizing the decision of the committee. In the course of his statement, he said:

In an anonymous office tower, behind closed doors and safely tucked away from probing microphones, four Members of Parliament abrogated their responsibilities to aboriginal people.

[*Translation*]

He then went on to disclose the names of four members of the Committee who, in his words, “voted to block the report”.

On April 1, at another *in camera* meeting, the Committee considered a motion to report the action of the Hon. Member for Kenora—Rainy River to the House. The report was adopted on April 7 and later presented to the House. On the presentation of the report the House was formally seized of the matter.

[*English*]

The matter raised by the Hon. Member for Calgary South yesterday concerned the publication in the press of certain proceedings which took place at an *in camera* meeting of the