

say he saw the Bill. Mr. Stettler said: "I think it's a better package than the draft released in June". He said: "I think it's a better package".

Mr. Benjamin: He knew the contents.

Mr. Andre: As I indicated in the House in answer to questions on more than one occasion, I believe, we have been engaged in consultations on this legislation since the end of June. We have discussed it with the Consumers' Association of Canada, the National Pensioners and Senior Citizens Federation, the National Anti-Poverty League, the Canadian Drug Manufacturers Association and the Pharmaceutical Manufacturers Association of Canada. My officials have been in discussion with all kinds of officials and people in my office have been in discussion. That is what consultation is all about. However, no one saw the Bill.

I will have to check the dates because I cannot be sure but I think that the interview Mr. Stettler gave *The Journal* was before I presented the Bill to my Cabinet colleagues for their approval. Therefore, he could not have known what was in the package because the package, *per se*, might not even have been established at the particular time of the interview.

I find it a little disturbing that my ethics would be questioned, that suggestions would be made that I have been consulting or taking instructions from a foreign Government, in view of the fact I stated explicitly here that I have talked to no one in the United States, from the Trade Office, or from the American Pharmaceutical Manufacturers Association. I stated that directly. In essence, what the Hon. House Leader of the New Democratic Party is doing is suggesting that I misled the House. He is saying that I did not tell the truth when I made that statement—

Mr. Benjamin: He didn't say that at all.

Mr. Andre: —because he is suggesting that somehow I caused the Bill to be shown to others previously.

Mr. Benjamin: No, he didn't say that either.

Mr. Andre: The only breach under the broad definition of "ethics" which occurred is when I extended the usual courtesies and told the New Democratic Party that I was going to introduce the Bill for first reading, gave those Hon. Members a briefing, and they used that knowledge to put together a filibuster procedure to prevent me from doing so. For the first time in Canadian history we actually had the refusal of a Party to grant the right to introduce a Bill.

Mr. Murphy: It's not the first time.

Mr. Andre: Never has the fundamental principle of democracy been challenged in that way. Never before has that happened. If there was a breach of privilege, Mr. Speaker, that might be the breach of privilege. To attempt to deny someone to introduce a motion or a Bill attacks the very roots of democracy.

Privilege—Mr. Riis

Mr. Speaker: I do not want to cut off the Hon. Minister, but I do want to do something which I think Speakers probably do with some hesitancy. I want to mention the issue of relevancy and say that I think we should stay on point.

Second, I can advise the Hon. Minister, and I think it may be of some comfort to him, that I have not taken this point of privilege, or the remarks which have been made, as an attack on the honour and ethics of the Minister or of any Hon. Member in the Chamber.

Mr. Riis: Absolutely not.

Mr. Speaker: I have not taken it in that way.

Mr. Andre: I did.

Mr. Speaker: The reason the question of ethics did concern the Chair was that I was—

Mr. Benjamin: Now you are paranoid.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The reason the issue of ethics did concern the Chair was that there might be some misunderstanding in the Chamber as to the direction in which those remarks were aimed. That is why I rose a few moments ago. I hope all Hon. Members can accept that the Chair does not take anything which has been said as an attack on the personal honour of the Minister or any Hon. Member in the Chamber. I think that is the disposition. I see heads nodding in agreement on the opposition side. Will the Hon. Minister please continue?

Mr. Andre: If in fact there is no direct challenge or suggestion on the part of the New Democratic Party that I released the Bill or gave someone its contents, then why are we discussing a point of privilege? If the New Democratic Party accepts my word that in fact no such release was made by me, what can be the point of privilege? What is the use of this discussion about privilege if in fact those Hon. Members accept my word that I did not release.

I now have a copy of the transcript from the debate where Mr. Stettler said: "Some of the pricing features in that Bill were pretty bad and I think there's been some changes". He said: "I think there's been some changes". On the basis of that, that Party makes the accusation that I told the Americans before I told Canadians and have raised this frivolous point of privilege.

Mr. Benjamin: No, we didn't say that.

Mr. Andre: I personally find that offensive. I have been honest and courteous with that Party and it has used my courtesy in an attempt to frustrate this House from operating, and I find that offensive.

Mr. Benjamin: On the same point of privilege, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: In the interests of perhaps keeping the discussion to the point, I just want to reiterate the point as the Chair sees it at this time, that is that, in whatever manner,