

Privilege—Mr. S. Robinson

untrammelled access into my office? How about meetings of caucus and Cabinet?

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Keeper: That is specious.

Mr. Kaplan: The Hon. Member indicates they are in a different category. Let me point out to you, Mr. Speaker, and remind you that Members have the right to reserve rooms in this precinct for such purposes as discussion that relate to their duties as Members of Parliament. I reserved a room. I had a purpose for which that room was wanted. I would suggest it is my privilege as a Member under that well established practice of yours, Mr. Speaker, of allowing Members to reserve rooms, to invite people to those rooms whom I want to invite—not just any Member of Parliament who hears about that meeting and thinks he would like to come to it—I had a specific purpose in mind. It was a valid public purpose. I think a lock-up—and I want to say a word about lock-ups—is very much in the public interest. To suggest that the purpose of the lock-up was to manipulate the media is inconsistent with the high standard of the media in this country. It is also inconsistent with what happened in that room.

I did not attend. There was no lecture or brainwashing sermon. What was done, incidentally, was done at the request of many members of the media. I understand that 35 members of the media attended. The purpose of the lock-up was to give them a chance to read the Bill in time for their deadlines, so that they would be prepared to report responsibly on it. Officials were present so that questions could be asked and answered, but there was no attempt to brainwash the media of Canada. I think the Hon. Member makes an unworthy suggestion in suggesting that even had we wanted to brainwash the media, which we did not, we would have been able to achieve that result. It was purely and simply a response to media requests with complicated legislation, with a great deal of public interest, with imminent deadlines to be able to serve the Canadian people as the media are required to do. The Hon. Member opposite is not the only one with the responsibility to serve the public.

He received his copy of the material at virtually the same time as the media—perhaps with a minute or two difference, because I did not know where he was. All of the discussions we have had about secrecy, rules, undertakings, barring the door and seeing who goes in the room go to undermine any suggestion that there is anything wrong with sharing the contents of legislation, as I did on a confidential basis for very good reasons before first reading of this legislation.

Let me say that if anyone has a question of privilege arising out of yesterday, it was me. I followed your rules, Mr. Speaker. I reserved a room. I had a valid purpose in mind for it and found that, because an uninvited person, an outsider to that event, chose to come and sit in, I was not allowed to use it. How would the Hon. Member react if he reserved a room, as he must do from time to time for his own purposes, and found

other Members of Parliament who had not been invited coming and sitting in the room?

I close by simply asking that if privileges are to be looked at, this privilege to reserve a room and use it for valid public purposes without interference be sustained. Let me reiterate also that the New Democratic Party has found one way or another to refuse to face up to the difficult problem of national security. Members of the NDP have chosen to attack stridently anything that has been put forward rather than telling the Canadian people, their diminishing group of supporters across the country—

Mr. Deans: You could not even make a room secure, for heaven's sake. You could not keep the people in the room.

Mr. Kaplan:—whether or not they support separation or whether or not they support the review committee. What mandate would they recommend to avoid all these difficult issues? The New Democratic Party has contented itself with a strident attack on anything, and I believe its Members are discrediting themselves by what they are doing.

Mr. Speaker: The Chair does not intend to hear a large number of further representations in the circumstances. I invite Hon. Members to be brief. The Chair will recognize the Hon. Member for Hamilton Mountain (Mr. Deans) and the Hon. Member for Regina West (Mr. Benjamin). Hopefully then the Chair will render a decision.

Mr. Deans: I will be very brief, Mr. Speaker. The Minister indicated that yesterday I made reference to a representation made to Mr. Speaker Jerome, and I did. I said, to paraphrase it, that Mr. Speaker Jerome had agreed that the matter was of some concern. Those may not be my exact words. Let me read what I based that on. It is one sentence. Mr. Speaker Jerome said:

The Hon. Member has certainly raised a valid point as to conditions that ought to surround this kind of lock-up in so far as Members are concerned.

That was the statement to which I was referring. I said there must be some way to keep Ministers from doing what even Mr. Speaker Jerome recognized was certainly stepping on, if not over, the bounds of what was acceptable.

Mr. Les Benjamin (Regina West): Mr. Speaker, the submission of the Solicitor General is extraneous to the point of the question of privilege raised by my colleague from Hamilton Mountain (Mr. Deans). It is too bad that you must decide on this issue in the early days of your occupancy of the highest office of this place. However, I want to submit to you that the point here is the supremacy of Parliament. No one except a Member of the executive council with his oaths of secrecy and Cabinet secrecy has a right to receive, be informed or be briefed about, legislation before Members of Parliament receive it, but, more particularly, before a Bill has received first reading in the House of Commons and before the House of Commons, under your aegis, Sir, has authorized the publishing and printing of that legislation. That is the question. No one else, I repeat, no one should be privy before first