

## PRIVILEGE

### RELEASE TO OPPOSITION CRITICS OF ADVANCE COPIES OF DOCUMENTS

**Hon. Bob Kaplan (York Centre):** Mr. Speaker, the question of privilege on which I rise, and of which I have given you notice, arises out of a matter I raised under Standing Order 21 before Question Period and on the evident position taken by the Government in heckling while I was speaking.

I rose following the announcement this morning by the Government that it would finally be making public the Parker Commission report into allegations of conflict of interest on the part of the former Minister of Regional Industrial Expansion. As you know, Mr. Speaker, and as I submit, there is a well established practice of a courtesy being extended to the media, on which I do not insist as a question of privilege, but which has been an established practice, and to members of the Opposition concerned, of advance copies being provided of difficult, complex and lengthy documents, as it has been indicated this one will be. It is necessary in order to have informed debate. It is necessary in order to permit Members of Parliament who are called upon to respond and comment on the report to have an advance copy in order to discharge their proper functions as a—

**Mr. Speaker:** Order. I hesitate, of course, to interrupt the Hon. Member because he is an experienced and senior Member in this place. He may have a grievance, but I have to make it very clear to him that it is not a question of privilege.

No Government, certainly in contemporary times, has ever been obliged to put out a document in advance. Sometimes it is done and sometimes it is not. In any event, while it may be a matter of complaint on the part of the Hon. Member, I have to advise him that it is not a point of privilege.

However, the Hon. Member has made his point and, of course, members of the Government are here and perhaps there will be some further action, but that is certainly not for the Speaker to say.

• (1510)

**Hon. Ray Hnatyshyn (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada):** Mr. Speaker, as the hon. gentleman knows, this commission was established by the Government under the Public Inquiries Act. I am informed that the document will be released tomorrow through a briefing which is taking place under the auspices and control of the Royal Commissioner. Chief Justice Parker is in control of the briefing and will be dealing, at ten o'clock I think on the day of the tabling, with those parties which had standing before the commission.

I have heard the Hon. Member and I propose to get the direction of the Chief Justice with regard to the request made. I would explain to the Hon. Member that this is not a government briefing but a briefing and release, with an embargo of

## Statements by Ministers

course, to those parties which had standing before the commission. I think that includes the party of the hon. gentleman.

**Mr. Kaplan:** Mr. Speaker, that is quite different from the understanding that I had arrived at from various rumours and statements made by the Government. I accept the Minister's word that it is not a document being put out by the Government. Therefore, I withdraw the criticism which I was proposing to make of the Government for failing to do so.

It is most unusual that a report of a royal commission is released by the commissioner. It is normally the Government which has commissioned it that releases it. That is the reason for the misunderstanding that arose.

With regard to advance briefings by the commissioner, I confirm what the Minister said, that I learned through counsel that documents were going to be made available in Toronto to the counsel to parties which had standing before the royal commission. I was not aware, and I gather that the Minister is not certain, that there will be an opportunity for counsel to be informed on, ask questions about, or see the report in advance of it being made public. I will look into that through the channel of the royal commission.

**Mr. Speaker:** I want to thank the Hon. Member for York Centre (Mr. Kaplan) for his gracious comments. I also want to thank the Minister of Justice (Mr. Hnatyshyn). Although it was not a question of privilege, as I said, this has perhaps helped resolve a difficulty.

## ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[English]

### EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

#### TABLING OF DOCUMENT ON PEACEKEEPING IN CENTRAL AMERICA

**Right Hon. Joe Clark (Secretary of State for External Affairs):** Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 67(2) I rise to table, in both official languages, a discussion document relating to the Central America peacekeeping observer organization.

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### EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

#### PEACEKEEPING IN CENTRAL AMERICA—STATEMENT BY SECRETARY OF STATE FOR EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

**Right Hon. Joe Clark (Secretary of State for External Affairs):** Mr. Speaker, I want to report to the House upon my conversations and meetings last week in Nicaragua, Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras and Costa Rica and, in particular, to discuss the peace process agreed to unanimously by the five