

member worried about my privileges. We should think about it for a moment, particularly the hon. member for Saskatoon West (Mr. Hnatyshyn) who has just left the chamber. The hon. member quoted Shakespeare, that Brutus was an honourable man. Either he believes that the minister's word is not to be challenged or he challenges it.

Personally, I could see the House disintegrate if some of these unwritten rules are flaunted, taken advantage of by the minister, ignored by the member, by innuendo or what have you. I do not think the record of the Minister of Justice warrants the type of doubt which has been expressed. It seems to me that the moment the minister said: "My word as an honourable gentleman is that I did not deliberately mislead the House", that should have ended the matter. The key word is "deliberate". It is not whether a conclusion or a decision is final or qualified or whether a cabinet decision is a cabinet decision.

I can remember as a new member of cabinet being very pleased because a decision of cabinet—or at least I thought it was a cabinet decision—gave me certain latitude in a collective agreement to give a particular group a COLA clause. I spent my day quite excitedly, preparing my negotiations based on that, only to find when I read the fine print that there were important qualifications to the decision.

Perhaps Parliament wants to address itself—and perhaps it should—as to when a decision is not a decision. Is a decision a decision when it is qualified? Is a decision not a decision until it is described by the minister as the final decision? It seems to me that all of these matters are important, but not nearly as important as the parliamentary tradition that when a member rises in the House of Commons and says "I am telling the truth", it is the word of an honourable gentleman and it should not be questioned in the House. The moment a member or a minister rises in his place and says that, the inference is clear that he will pay the price when and if it is ever determined that he has lied. There are historical precedents in other Houses for that. If hon. members opposite are willing to rise in their places to say that he lied, not just deliberately misled the House, when the minister stood in the House today and said that he had no intention of misleading the House, then they are entering into a very dangerous area.

Perhaps Madam Speaker will want to take into consideration when a decision is not a decision, but that is not the issue. The issue is whether the Minister of Justice in his answer yesterday deliberately misled the House. In his defence he said that he did not, and based upon precedent, that is the word of an hon. member of the House. No one in the House can tell me that the Minister of Justice is not an honourable gentleman, that his 20 years in the House do not comprise a magnificent record. It grieves me that anyone in the House would want to leave the impression, by inference, that the hon. minister is not so honourable and is prepared to lie. I cannot bring myself to believe that, but it is really what Madam Speaker must decide over the course of events—whether the minister deliberately lied when he said that he had no intention of misleading the House, either deliberately or unintentionally.

Privilege—Mr. Crosbie

Mr. Cullen: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. Since you have been in the chair since two o'clock and you have to occupy it on a permanent basis, perhaps there would be all-party consent to have a ten minute break.

Madam Speaker: I thank the hon. member very much, but I think I can continue.

Mr. John Gamble (York North): Madam Speaker, my remarks will be brief. I listened with some considerable interest to the comments of the hon. member for Lincoln (Mr. Mackasey), falling as they did upon the general line of argument established by the parliamentary secretary to the government House leader and the government House leader himself. In terms of their submission, it really amounts to this: Once a minister of the Crown has risen in his place and said, "I did not intentionally mislead the House", that is the end of the issue and Madam Speaker's function has ended. I hardly think that that is the approach which should be taken, having regard to some inconsistencies to which I will draw Your Honour's attention. However, let me just deal with some of the remarks which have been made in terms of long service.

We are dealing not only with a member of government and a minister of the Crown, but with the Attorney General of Canada, the chief legal officer of the country. The hon. member for Lincoln said that in the event the House cannot rely upon some of the unwritten rules, it will disintegrate. I submit that it will disintegrate if we cannot, as members of the House, come to rely upon the truth of statements made here. If we as members are persistent in this issue, it is because the arguments presented and the evidence given heretofore at least arouse a suspicion in our minds. The timing is extremely close, but if it were timing alone, I am sure Your Honour's decision as to whether there is a prima facie case of the minister intentionally misleading the House and accordingly depriving all hon. members of their rights and privileges would be easily reached. However, I direct your attention to a quotation which has already been made, a quotation from *Hansard* of yesterday, as reported at page 17592, in the answer of the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau), wherein he said:

Madam Speaker, the cabinet met yesterday, yesterday morning.

I am sure Madam Speaker will recall the statement made by the Minister of Justice (Mr. Chrétien) today. In response to questions of members on this side of the House concerning when the cabinet met, the Minister of Justice said: "The cabinet was meeting when I left the room on Tuesday and it met until seven o'clock in the evening". There is a clear contradiction in the two statements. Is the Prime Minister telling us the truth and, in fact, did the cabinet meet on Tuesday morning as it normally does; or are we to believe the Attorney General when he tell us that the cabinet was meeting when he left the House after question period on Tuesday and continued to sit until seven o'clock? There alone, without any explanation, are sufficient grounds, in my submission, for finding that there is a prima facie case that you might then conclude represented an intentional misleading of the House by the Minister of Justice and Attorney General which should