

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Monday, June 15, 1970

The House met at 2 p.m.

PRIVILEGE

MR. HOWARD (SKEENA)—DISCLOSURE TO PRESS OF INFORMATION IN INTERIM REPORT ON NON-MEDICAL USE OF DRUGS

Mr. Frank Howard (Skeena): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a question of privilege relating particularly to an announcement over the CBC on the 11 o'clock news on Friday night and to other news items which were carried over the weekend dealing with the interim report of the LeDain commission on the non-medical use of drugs.

It was obvious from watching the newscast and listening to Capital Report and other news items that certain members of the press have inside information as to the contents of the report. Reference was made to the number of pages in the report—

Mr. Lambert (Edmonton West): Seven hundred.

Mr. Howard (Skeena):—and to the legal difficulties which might arise if certain aspects of the report were adopted, the awkward position in which the courts might be placed when imposing sentences dealing with infractions of the current laws, the matter of diet pills, marijuana, a cabinet committee and other things. This clearly indicates that certain individuals within the news media have received information with respect to the report in question.

It is my contention, since government is the element of Parliament which has possession of this interim report and has so far not tabled it, that the contents thereof, or part of them, have been revealed to certain persons in the news field contrary to proper practice and to the requirement that such reports be tabled in Parliament. It is an affront to the people of Canada and to Parliament for someone in government to leak certain information, as is obviously the case here, to the press while at the same time denying full information in the form of the report itself.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Howard (Skeena): After much prodding and questioning on Friday morning last, the Prime Minister said the report would be tabled in the House. I believe that it smacks of arrogance and manipulation for someone in his cabinet to contravene the spirit of that commitment.

If Your Honour finds that a prima facie case of privilege does exist, I intend to found upon it the following motion, seconded by my hon. friend from Winnipeg North:

This House expresses the opinion that the government should forthwith table the interim report of the commission of inquiry into the non-medical use of drugs.

Mr. Speaker: I suggest to the hon. member for Skeena and to other hon. members that there should not be a debate on the proposed motion. A motion in similar terms was proposed late last week by the hon. member for Peace River. After much thought and consideration and after hearing argument on the subject, the Chair ruled that though there might have been a grievance no question of privilege arose. I therefore have to say that, even in the light of the circumstances to which the hon. member has alluded, this cannot be considered a proper question of privilege and I have to rule that the hon. member's proposed motion cannot be put to the House.

• (2:10 p.m.)

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

COMMUNICATIONS

TABLING REPORT ON PARTICIPATION BY TELECOMMUNICATIONS CARRIERS IN PUBLIC DATA-PROCESSING

Hon. Eric W. Kierans (Postmaster General and Minister of Communications): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 41(2) I wish to table two copies in both official languages of a report on "Participation by Telecommunications Carriers in Public Data-Processing". This report has been prepared by the Department of Communications within the framework of the telecommission studies. It should not, however, be regarded as a final telecommission report.