

Privilege—Mr. Holtmann

Mr. Speaker: Perhaps I should explain. The Hon. Member is asking on what we are agreeing. The Hon. Parliamentary Secretary rose and made the usual motion in these cases. It actually should have been done by the Hon. Member for Selkirk—Interlake. The Hon. Member is in his seat. I see him nodding. I will take it that he has proposed the motion. I thank Hon. Members for their courtesy.

The Hon. Member for Carleton—Charlotte (Mr. McCain) was seeking the floor a moment ago. I asked him—and he very kindly agreed—to keep his remarks until later because I did not want to interrupt the Hon. Member for York South—Weston (Mr. Nunziata). I will now recognize the Hon. Member for Carleton—Charlotte.

Mr. McCain: Mr. Speaker, if we as Members of the House cannot trust one another to meet *in camera*, how can we expect the nation to trust us? If we do not find this to be a subject matter worthy of further consideration in some form which would give us the security of confidentiality, in the eyes of the public we are remiss in our duties.

I find it incredible that we are referring in some instances to brown envelopes which may be received from other sources. That is not at all relevant; it is not to be excused either. I do not admire it, but it is not relevant to the trust which Hon. Members should be able to place in their fellow colleagues, regardless of the Party to which colleagues may belong.

It has been my privilege to be in this sphere of life for quite some time. I must say with pride that at no time have I ever breached the confidentiality of an *in camera* meeting.

Mr. Nunziata: What about caucus?

Mr. McCain: At no time have I breached the confidentiality of caucus. You mentioned something about press and its accuracy—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. McCain: I say through you, Mr. Speaker—

Mr. Speaker: That is much better.

Mr. McCain: —that I can make exactly the same claim, regardless of how it may have been printed.

Mr. Marchi: That is not what we heard.

Mr. McCain: The gentleman who is interjecting made some comments in respect of the press. I would be inclined to confirm that comment. Therefore, I think he is being rather irrelevant and irascible in his approach to this subject matter.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members are sometimes irascible and irrelevant. However, I am sure all Hon. Members are conscientiously putting forward points of interest to the Chair.

Mr. Jim Hawkes (Calgary West): Mr. Speaker, I rise on the same question of privilege. I will try to be brief. The fact that so many Hon. Members have risen underlines the sense of

importance which they attach to agreements freely entered into by Members of the House. An agreement to enter into an *in camera* meeting and to keep the report confidential until it is presented to the House is an important commitment. It enables us to conduct public business in a very efficient and effective fashion.

The grounds raised in this question of privilege are well founded, but perhaps narrower than they might have been. In examining the precedents of this and similar chambers, I think Your Honour will find that historically there is some sense of responsibility on the public press to report accurately the doings of a public body such as the House of Commons.

For instance, an article was presented to the House which alleges that an unnamed Member of Parliament provided the particular reporter with information about what went on in an *in camera* meeting. Indeed, it may be true that that is what happened. However, it is possible that someone who is not a Member of Parliament passed himself off as a Member of Parliament in dealing with the particular reporter. It is also possible, but unlikely, that a reporter uses the words "Member of Parliament" without indeed having attempted to talk to a Member of Parliament. These things are possibilities. Unless we have a motion which would go forward to the appropriate committee to examine the responsibilities of Hon. Members when they freely enter into an agreement to participate in an *in camera* session of this kind, we have no mechanism which would enable us to sort it out.

It may be that the press has violated the privileges of the House. It may be that a member of the staff, a translator or someone in the room violated the privileges of the House. It may be that indeed a Member of Parliament violated the privileges of the House. If we do not have an affirmative motion and we do not have an inquiry, we are left with those three possibilities, none of which is particularly pleasant to anyone who belongs to any one of the three groups. It cannot be a pleasant situation for the reporter. It cannot be a pleasant situation for members of the committee. It cannot be pleasant for members of the staff who serve so well that and other committees.

In order to clarify the matter and to take off the heads of those three groups the thought of suspicion, Your Honour might be well advised to permit a motion, along the lines indicated by the Hon. Member, to come forward.

Mr. Keeper: Mr. Speaker, I hesitate to enter into the debate again. However, I should like to make one point. To raise the matter of a leak from the Steering Committee as a matter of privilege assumes that in order to draft the report we had to go *in camera*. In fact I was surprised that the meeting that morning was an *in camera* one. I am confident that we can and could have drafted the report without going *in camera*. I just ask Your Honour to consider that point when you are considering the question of privilege.

Mr. Speaker: I want to thank all Hon. Members. Of course I will reserve on the matter because the Chair certainly views