

Point of Order—Mr. Riis

I suggest if you were to stand the matter down to give me an opportunity to discuss this matter with the House Leaders of the two opposition Parties, we may come to a motion or an agreement which suits the purposes of the House and enables this matter to be dealt with properly.

Mr. Riis: The suggestion the House Leader for the Government has made is a good one. The Leader of the Official Opposition (Mr. Turner) and the Leader for the New Democratic Party suggested we follow the same course that was proposed when there was a leak by the previous Minister of Finance, the Hon. Marc Lalonde. At that time there was a suggestion by the Official Opposition that a special committee be struck of 11 Members to examine all aspects of Budget security and secrecy. I suggest that be one of the alternatives we consider.

Mr. Speaker: Just so that everyone understands what is happening, the Hon. Minister of Finance (Mr. Wilson) filed with me on Wednesday night the first of a series of applications on privilege. The Hon. Minister of Finance, because his privilege was first in point of time, was the first heard. The Hon. Minister of Finance did not move the usual motion. Comment was made about that, but that is completely the Minister's prerogative.

The second question of privilege filed in point of time was that of the Right Hon. Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Turner). I want to make it clear that that motion is very much before me. The Right Hon. Leader of the Opposition did make the proper submission that, if I found there was a prima facie case of privilege, he would move the motion. Therefore, that is very much in front of us.

I indicated that there were other applications on privilege. The Hon. Member for Windsor West (Mr. Gray) is quite right and has helpfully remarked that privilege is a matter for the entire House. I have taken in all those applications collectively in the debate that proceeded for many hours. As I said, that debate will continue now, because privilege does take precedence over Government Orders.

We have a suggestion that this matter be referred to the appropriate committee. If, after examining carefully all of the argument, the Chair decides that there has been a prima facie breach of privilege with respect to one or more applications in front of the Chair, then, and

under those circumstances, the matter is moved to the entire House. At that time, if the House wishes, the whole matter can be debated by all of the Members in the House. They can decide, if they wish, to then send the matter to the committee. The Chair rules only on whether or not there has been a prima facie breach of privilege. The ultimate decision as to whether it goes to committee lies with the House. If it goes to the committee, the committee deals with the substantive issue of whether there was a breach of privilege. I want Members and the public to understand I am only dealing with privilege at the prima facie level.

It has been suggested that the House Leaders consider the matter, that we stand down debate on the question of privilege at least for a while, and we will see what flows from that discussion. If that discussion decides to move the matter directly to a committee, that will be the course of events provided that all Hon. Members are prepared to accept that procedure.

I take it that it is the wish of the House to stand down the debate on privilege for the moment. If I do that, we will proceed with the Government Order. I am under the impression that at some time later today the House Leaders will come to the Chair and give me some indication of where we are as a consequence of their discussions. I gather that is the understanding.

• (1120)

Mr. Riis: Yes, Mr. Speaker, that is the understanding. I would like to submit that there is an alternative. After you consider all the evidence presented to date, there might not be a prima facie case of breach of privilege. Since Members of the House from both sides are arguing concerns about the process, the other alternative would be to seek unanimous consent to have the matter referred to the appropriate committee. Most Members would wish to have this process examined, not explicitly for this case, but to include the whole process of how Budgets are handled in the future.

Mr. Speaker: Perhaps I did not make myself clear. From what the Hon. Member has stated, and especially with respect to the reply of the Minister of Justice (Mr. Lewis), I was under the impression that it may well be that the House Leaders today will make some arrangement which will make it completely unnecessary for me to decide whether or not there is a prima facie case of privilege, or more than one prima facie case of privilege.