

Privilege—Mr. Nunziata

Mr. Speaker: The Hon. Member presented his case. He has already presented the case the wished the Speaker to consider, I take it.

Mr. Nunziata: I want to plead my case, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: I asked the Hon. Member if he had completed his case and he said, yes. That is why I went to the next Hon. Member, with respect.

Mr. Gauthier: Mr. Speaker, may I just ask now, with all respect, that you possibly give us some time? I had to absent myself from the House for a few minutes and I came back because I heard you were going to rule on this question of privilege.

I find it a very important point when I ask you if you could assure me, and members of my caucus, that no one else but those to whom the words spoken in my caucus are directed are hearing those words. I accept the fact that you say that that is physically impossible for you to guarantee and, in your view, you have done the utmost to avoid that. But the question at hand is that there is now a sort of veil—

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Gauthier: —an uncertainty in my—

Mr. Hnatyshyn: Come on.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I understand exactly the point the Hon. Member is going to make. I think he knows that.

Mr. Deans: How do you know it?

Mr. Benjamin: Let him say it.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. I want to be very careful about where it is these things are being directed. May I say, for example, I have yet to receive from anyone a request that I look into the matter, other than the Hon. Member's request now that I look into the question of—I can say to the Hon. Member that I have done some checking this morning as to the existing systems. However, does the Hon. Member for Ottawa-Vanier (Mr. Gauthier) wish to make further representations?

Mr. Gauthier: You acknowledged that to me a few moments ago when you said that indeed you had received a request from the chairman of my caucus. I made that request earlier of the Sergeant-at-Arms. But I am asking you as Speaker of the House, as a person elected by us and responsible for certain things, to look into this matter. I take it that one of the things you are responsible for is the integrity of the work we do here and in caucus. I am asking you, Mr. Speaker, to look into this matter, get a copy of this paper and see if you can tell me, and Hon. Members of the House, that at this time you do not know of any existing case where such a thing would happen.

Mr. Speaker: What I tried to indicate to the Hon. Member earlier is that I have already undertaken some of those investigations and I am satisfied. I have reviewed our procedures. I

did this some months ago. I am satisfied that everything that can be humanly done to prevent any such leak of information coming out of any caucus room is being done.

I am also satisfied, as I indicated before, that the systems which were in place 20, 25, 30 and even 15 years ago were not adequate to enable one to make that claim. The Hon. Member knows that. I have said that many times.

I am prepared to go back and look again to make sure that our systems are adequate, but I can give the Hon. Member the assurance that both the Speakers before me met regularly with the Sergeant-at-Arms as does this Speaker. We have developed plans to try to cope with these situations, and anything that can humanly be done that we know of, we are doing.

Therefore, I can only say to the Hon. Member that there is no way in the world that I can imagine, or that I know of, that we have not tried to ensure that these things do not leak.

Mr. Gauthier: May I make one last point?

Mr. Speaker: On a point of order?

Mr. Gauthier: On the same point of order. I understand what you are telling me, and I understand exactly where you stand in this matter of modernizing the system. I know it has been done in this building, but I also know that there is a lot of work still to be done in the other buildings. And you know that, Mr. Speaker. So I am asking you to give me the assurance that indeed that work will continue to be done so that we can avoid having situations which existed in prior years. That is what I am asking you.

Mr. Speaker: I undertake to give the Hon. Member absolutely the assurance he seeks.

Mr. de Corneille: Point of order.

Mr. Speaker: Are these different points of order, not on this matter? The Hon. Member for Eglinton-Lawrence (Mr. de Corneille) rose first, I believe.

* * *

POINTS OF ORDER**POSITION OF PRIME MINISTER RESPECTING CONFIDENTIALITY OF CAUCUS MEETINGS**

Mr. Roland de Corneille (Eglinton-Lawrence): Mr. Speaker, my concern arises out of the Question Period. It concerns my privileges and, for that matter, the privileges of all Hon. Members of the House of Commons. It arises out of the remarks of the Prime Minister (Mr. Mulroney) himself. The Prime Minister did not agree to the question as to whether it is proper for Hon. Members of this House of Commons to have access to or listen to what is being said in a caucus. In view of his lack of concern in this matter, I feel—

Mr. Clark (Yellowhead): Order.

An Hon. Member: Smarten up, eh?