Prime Minister as well, and I quoted him earlier in my question, that there is no plan to issue an interim report.

Another member of the Commission, Mr. James McCambly, said there was no interim report and that such a report had not even been discussed previously.

My question of privilege is quite straightforward. In order to do my work as a Member of the House, I have to rely not on judgments or matters of opinion but on alleged contentions of fact coming from Ministers of the Crown, principally in this case the Prime Minister. One should be able to assume that what the Prime Minister says, not in a debating context but in a claim of facts, is the case.

What he told us was there would be an interim report. There would be a meeting about an interim report today. We all assumed on Friday that that would be the case. In contradiction of that, we have a senior staff member of the committee as well as a member of the committee who say that is not the case.

My question of privilege is simply this. The Prime Minister, inadvertently or deliberately, has misled the House. We have to have this important matter resolved in order to do our job correctly as Members of Parliament.

Hon. Doug Lewis (Minister of State and Minister of State (Treasury Board) and Acting President of the Treasury Board): Mr. Speaker, I wish to respond to my Hon. friend's comments.

There is no question when one reads the actual words of the Prime Minister (Mr. Mulroney), and interprets them the way any normal individual would, rather than trying to draw inferences for partisan purposes which are not in the words, what they mean. What I want to do is read the words in the House so that this one time my hon. friend will be able to understand what the Prime Minister said very clearly. He said:

> ""Nobody is talking about waiting until June and the fact is that Mr. de Grandpré is scheduled to meet with the Ministers responsible as early as Friday of this week to discuss an interim report."

To "discuss", d-i-s-c-u-s-s, an interim report. There is no suggestion that there was going to be an interim report. There is no suggestion there was going to be a report in writing. It was a discussion about an interim report.

Mr. Broadbent: He did not say discuss the possibility of one, either.

Mr. Lewis: Fortunately, when my hon. friend, in a state of—well, I will not use the word "ignorance", but perhaps in a state of confusion raised the matter in question here again today, the Hon. Minister for International Trade (Mr. Crosbie) gave it another shot to try and explain to the Hon. Member that there was discussion with Mr. de Grandpré of an interim report. Not an interim report discussed, discussion of an interim report.

• (1210)

Then my hon. friend goes to the word "June" and says: "We are not going to wait until June". The Hon. Minister indicated that because of the discussions this morning there was no need for an interim report. That is what was discussed. The possibility of an interim report was discussed. The Hon. Minister made it very clear that in fact the final report will be presented within a reasonable length of time. Therefore there was no need for an interim report which may have flowed from the discussion.

We are talking about debate. We are talking about my hon. friend trying to twist the words that were used to get some political mileage out of them. He did not get any mileage. He did not get a foot. He did not get an inch. He did not get a millimetre.

I submit that this is obviously not a question of privilege. It is a matter for debate.

Mr. David Barrett (Esquimalt-Juan de Fuca): Mr. Speaker, since I too was the recipient of an answer in question here in the House, I wish to point out to the Chair that the wording in response to a similar question from me leaves no doubt of the intention of the answer of the Prime Minister (Mr. Mulroney). It states:

> "So if the Hon. Member would kindly wait until Friday and then for the final report—"

I was being admonished for raising this issue because, as the Prime Minister had informed the Leader of the New Democratic Party, (Mr. Broadbent) there would be an interim report this Friday. I was reminded of it by his answer to me.

I find it curious that the Prime Minister is not here to answer these questions and to clarify them, even though he told the Leader of the New Democratic Party that he would be here.

It is my presumption, and I would ask the Chair to correct me if I am wrong, that upon hearing the word of the Prime Minister, one should be assured that that word is indeed fact. I find now that it has become a question in my mind. The people of the country are interested in the answer because their jobs were the subject of discussion in the House. Now, today, we are being a given a construction of an interpretation that was obviously not meant in the initial answer.