

Proceedings on Adjournment Motion

staff. Again Mrs. Purdy refused to reveal her source.

Indeed, knowing as I do most members of the Halifax press or the press anywhere, it is obvious that even if her manager had told her to reveal her source she would have refused to do so and would have preferred to be fired for disobeying the order rather than breach what news people consider to be the sacred code of confidentiality. Finally there was a suggestion by telephone, which Mrs. Purdy advises me she felt came from one of the naval gentlemen, that since she was concerned about the fine toothcomb type of investigation among naval personnel, if she revealed the name no innocents would be hurt and it would prevent needless suffering. The suggestion was that if she named her source the net would not close around a whole lot of innocent fish who otherwise would be trapped in it. Again Mrs. Purdy said no.

I think it might be of interest to take a quick look at the legal position. From the legal point of view the position of news reporters in keeping their sources privileged is a questionable one. Nevertheless this is the code of newsmen. Short of an order from a judge in court, the disobedience of which may be considered contempt of court, I do not see how anybody can legally require a person in Mrs. Purdy's position to reveal her source of information. I think the naval officer should have known this. There is a question here regarding the message. So much has been made of it that obviously it seems to me to be at variance with statements made by the Minister of National Defence (Mr. Hellyer) or by senior civil servants with regard to whether Cornwallis will or will not be closed.

I suggest that there is no national security issue at stake here. However, there might be a very substantial economic issue and I think that Mrs. Purdy, in tackling the issue the way she did, was concerned about the economic effect on Nova Scotia of the closing of the Cornwallis base. I think that all hon. members representing the Atlantic provinces would regard the closing of that base as nothing short of an economic disaster for western Nova Scotia.

To give a slightly wry and ironic twist to this whole James Bond type of operation, I am informed that the message in question was inadvertently put on the bulletin board for a couple of hours where it could be seen not only by naval personnel but by civilian personnel at H.M.C. Dockyard. I do not know whether the Minister of National Defence or

[Mr. McCleave.]

the Associate Minister are aware of this development. When I was told of this fact the hope was expressed that I would not be treated as a national security risk by passing it along. I think the whole affair arose because of unrest, turmoil and a lack of certainty in the naval establishment in Halifax regarding the future of the Royal Canadian Navy. It is not really a tempest in a teacup; it has broader implications than that. I have said on other occasions in the house in dealing with national defence issues that we are living through a terrible period of uncertainty and nowhere does that uncertainty rest harder than in the area I serve.

Hon. Léo Cadieux (Associate Minister of National Defence): Mr. Speaker, as the hon. member for Halifax (Mr. McCleave) said, the Halifax radio and television station CJCH in a broadcast on November 18 disclosed information contained in a message that was classified "confidential" from training command headquarters to the fleet school, Halifax. The Atlantic special investigation detachment attached to maritime command was asked to investigate the release of confidential information. In the course of this investigation they interviewed some of the staff at the radio station to ascertain if they could provide information which would assist in the investigation. I am advised that no threats or any intimidation were employed but that those persons who were approached were advised that the information contained in the message was of a confidential nature.

I might add that the reason the message was classified confidential by training command was that it referred to tentative planning by that headquarters in respect of matters that had not yet been decided by Canadian forces headquarters. The disclosure of this information in the broadcast tended to indicate that decisions had been made which in fact had not been. A departmental representative who attended a meeting at Cornwallis on November 15 to hear representations from interested parties in the area in relation to the rumours that Cornwallis would be closed stated that no decision had been made with respect to its closure. He further stated that he had been authorized by the Minister of National Defence to say that, pending a final decision with respect to the future of the Canadian forces base Cornwallis, assurance could be given that it would not be closed before July 1, 1968. This is the position as of tonight.