

*Privilege—Mr. Holtmann*

private discussions of a parliamentary committee and its members remain *in camera* and remain with the members. It is essential that the reports of parliamentary committees remain the property of the committee until they are released to the public. They should not be the property of the press or the public in general, nor should there be speculation about what a member of the committee or a group of members of the committee said.

Later today I will be tabling a report of the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs. That report was prepared *in camera* and has not been leaked to the press or distributed to anyone. That report will become public when it is released.

It is important that the House Committee on Privileges and Elections hold public hearings on this issue so that the House can determine where it stands with respect to *in camera* meetings, how members should conduct themselves and, indeed, how the press should conduct itself when dealing with matters of this sensitivity.

**Mr. Fred McCain (Carleton—Charlotte):** Mr. Speaker, I find it incredible that the Hon. Member for Windsor West (Mr. Gray) would suggest to the House and the public at large that an *in camera* meeting should be anything but *in camera*. The purpose of such a meeting is to allow Members of the House, regardless of political faith, to try to arrive at a consensus, if possible, or at least make plans for the committee. It is not necessarily in the best interests of the committee or of the nation for these plans to become the property of the press immediately.

The Hon. Member for Windsor West has participated in *in camera* meetings unless he is an exception. As a Minister, items with which he had dealt had been before *in camera* committee meetings. If Members of the House cannot meet in good faith *in camera*, then the system will not work. The matter which has been placed before us by the Chairman of the Committee is one to which we must give very, very serious consideration in the interests of all Parties and all Canadians.

**Mr. Gerry St. Germain (Mission—Port Moody):** Mr. Speaker, I think it is a question of a lack of respect for the confidentiality of Steering Committees or meetings held *in camera*. Since I have been here, there have been numerous breaches of that confidence by members of the Opposition and it is disgusting—

**Mr. Speaker:** The Hon. Member for Mission—Port Moody (Mr. St. Germain) has made a statement but has not named an Hon. Member. However, I would ask the Hon. Member to walk carefully around danger and not to make charges in the Chamber. I would ask him to continue his remarks, which I always find helpful.

**Mr. St. Germain:** Mr. Speaker, I can cite an example. Regarding de Havilland, members of the Opposition actually had to apologize for breaches of confidentiality in regard to

meetings that were held *in camera* and this is why I bring the subject forward.

**Mr. Speaker:** I think in the interest of getting to the point, I would ask the Hon. Member for Mission—Port Moody to address the particular item that is before the Chair. As the Chair understands it, the Hon. Member for Selkirk—Interlake (Mr. Holtmann) has raised a question of privilege which is that something that went on in an *in camera* committee has turned up in the press. I understand that is the allegation. What goes with that allegation is the question of whether this is a breach of privilege because it is an *in camera* meeting.

● (1530)

Other Members have been concerned that because some Members have risen and said that they did not talk to the press, that was an invitation for the Speaker to perhaps look with disfavour on other Members who do not rise. I have made it quite clear that I have no intention of doing that. I do not take that as the intention. It is important to keep to the point. I treat the issue as a serious one. I would ask the Hon. Member to continue.

**Mr. St. Germain:** I will be guided by the wisdom of the Chair.

The question is this. Will Steering Committee meetings or meetings held *in camera* be kept in total confidentiality? If they are not, I think it is important that we have a ruling. It comes down to basic respect for this very institution; not the Hon. Members, not myself, the Member for Mission—Port Moody, but the institution. This is what we are concerned about. There have been breaches.

I urge you, Sir, to come forward with a decision on this issue. As standing committees meet daily, it is very important that there is a resolution to this issue so we can operate with a feeling of self-confidence.

**Ms. Copps:** You are afraid of the truth.

**Mr. John Nunziata (York South—Weston):** Mr. Speaker, I am not rising to plead *mea culpa, mea culpa*. I was not a member of the committee, or present at that particular meeting. I would like to make a few comments.

I take exception to the method by which this particular point of privilege has been raised. The Hon. Member rose as the Chairman of the Committee and indicated that there was a breach of privilege. He also indicated that he was not responsible for speaking to the media. Following that particular Member, a number of other Members of the Conservative Party, and Members of the committee, indicated that they were not responsible for the leak. That is unfortunate, because by process of elimination, the Conservative Party is pointing fingers in the direction of the Opposition. The previous speaker, the Hon. Member for Mission—Port Moody (Mr. St. Germain), has suggested that the leak came from this side of the House.