

**Mr. Collette:** I made those remarks in order to preface what I believe is a point or order. It is in reply to the remarks made by the hon. member for Provencher (Mr. Epp). So that the record is absolutely clear, the hon. member for St. John's East was clearly asking the Chair to initiate a reference to the Standing Committee on Procedure and Organization to look into the rules. I was saying that the Speaker did not have that power under the rules. I want that to be absolutely clear. That is what I said earlier. I dispute the interpretation given by the hon. member for Provencher.

**Mr. McGrath:** That is not what I said, Madam Speaker. What I said to you, with respect, was if you find that the rules do not cover this situation, then you should ask the House to refer it. You can recommend to the House, not that you refer it, but suggest to the House that this matter be referred to the Standing Committee on Procedure and Organization. That is not quite what the hon. member is trying to say. I leave the rest to the record.

● (1600)

**Mr. Bob Rae (Broadview-Greenwood):** Madam Speaker, I have listened with interest to the discussions over the last two days in respect of this question of privilege and I am moved to say a couple of things about this matter.

The first thing is the question as to whether we are able to discuss matters in committee, whether we are allowed to comment on them, or whether you are able to rule on them. That is not something which I think can be very much in dispute. The rules, it would seem to me, are pretty clear on that.

The point being made by members of the Conservative party perhaps deserve further study by the whole House. The question as to whether we can continue this does admittedly put us into a difficult situation. If we are told by the chairman of the committee that he is not able to deal with the question of privilege, and we are then told by you that you are not able to deal with the question of privilege because you cannot deal with a matter before a committee, this puts us into a very difficult Catch 22 situation. If that is the case, this is something which I think has to be studied. That is the first point, and I think it is a legitimate and real concern.

I do want to say something about the comments by the hon. member for Yukon (Mr. Nielsen). It seems to me rather extraordinary that, once one has had an explanation, whether or not it entirely satisfies the member, as this House has had an explanation from the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) of the country and from members of the cabinet, as to what transpired over the last five days, and the explanation has been that there was a change of mind or a change of heart on the part of the government, a member of this House can quite casually, as if talking about the weather, clearly leave on the record the implication that the very fact that there has been a change of mind brings to his mind two possible interpretations which lead him to say there is a prima facie case. He says either there was some kind of conspiracy involved here in which the cabinet was deliberately misleading and placing a forged

document before the committee—that is the first implication raised by the hon. member for Yukon, casually dropped as if this were the ordinary allegation one makes every day of the week about other members of the House of Commons. The second implication is that somebody has offered a bribe or somebody has taken a bribe.

I think it must be said that if a member of this House is going to make that kind of an allegation, let him say who made the bribe, when was it made, and when was it accepted.

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Rae:** Madam Speaker, you have said earlier in another context that the words of the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Clark) perhaps went beyond his thoughts. In many cases one would really think it is not an unusual occurrence for that to take place. But I would say it is very strange to me that the very fact of a change of mind, and how many instances are there in question period when that is exactly what we are trying to do, get the government to change its mind, and God would that they would change their mind in terms of policy on the economy—

**Some hon. Members:** Oh, oh!

**Mr. Rae:** If the Conservative party had understood the necessity of changing one's mind from time to time it would still be the government today, and everybody here knows it.

It is because of the very fact that the mere changing of a mind is seen to raise suddenly a prima facie case, either of conspiracy or of a bribe, that I must say, when that is the immediate thing brought to the mind of a member of this House I feel very sorry for that member.

It seems to me very strange indeed that one can casually make those kinds of allegations, saying that a bribe was offered, presumably by members of this party, that it was accepted, presumably by a member of cabinet, without saying who made the bribe, when it was made, and what was involved.

I know the hon. member for Yukon prides himself on being a member of the Bar of many jurisdictions. As a member of the Bar he knows perfectly well that to make that allegation about some other individual, were it not for the protection of the House—he knows perfectly well that is a blanket smear on the integrity not only of members of the government but members of the whole House, which I must say is pretty unacceptable and pretty strange.

I quite agree there is a problem which has been raised, and an embarrassment that has been caused. There has been a problem raised by the fact that the hon. member for St. John's East (Mr. McGrath) has been told that he cannot raise this in committee, and now when he comes before the House he is told he cannot raise it in the House. That is a genuine problem and a matter that has to be discussed. But, for the member for Yukon to say, just because there has been a change of mind on the part of the government, that raises a prima facie case of conspiracy or a prima facie case of fraud, is the most pathetic,