

members are Privy Councillors and as such are bound~~x~~ under oath to 'keep close and secret all such matters as shall be treated, debated and resolved on in Privy Council, without publishing or disclosing the same, or any part thereof, by Word, Writing or any otherwise to any Person out of the same Council, but to such only as be of the Council.' The consequences of this secrecy are far-reaching. Relying on this protection, Cabinet members are free to voice their opinions without reserve on all subjects which come up for discussion; the motives which have influenced the Cabinet in coming to its decision will not be disclosed; the dissentients can support the corporate policy without being themselves singled out for special attack or having their motives impugned; and the Cabinet derives no inconsiderable strategic advantage in being able to reveal hitherto undisclosed proposals at the most opportune moment. . . . Secrecy has usually been well preserved; on the whole, lapses have been rare." (1)

But the question arising in the debate was the danger of allowing information privately shared with and known to the Cabinet to leak out to outside sources, either Parliament, or certain departments. Cabinet secrecy was, of course, axiomatic. It dates back over 500 years. According to Lord Hankey, "in 1426 special rules were passed for securing secrecy, none being 'suffered to abide in the Council whiles matters of the said Council be treated therein, save

(1) MacG. Dawson: The Government of Canada. pp.219-220.