

Settlement of Trade Dispute with Mexico

the imposition of a surcharge on certain textiles entering Canada. Such information was conveyed to the House yesterday, pursuant to the minister's undertaking. The difficulty stems from the fact that prior to the tabling of the press release on the subject, the Minister of Transport had made an announcement outside the House.

In so far as the Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce is concerned, his undertaking seems to have been met by the tabling of the announcement at the opening of yesterday's session. The question is whether the prior announcement by a minister constitutes a breach of privilege.

I have on occasion referred hon. members to Citation 113 of Beauchesne and also to the views expressed by Sir Erskine May at page 45 of the 17th edition of the author's book on parliamentary practice. Without going into the details of these citations, I would remind hon. members that parliamentary privilege is the sum of the fundamental rights of the House and of its individual members over and above the common law rights of other citizens. Seen in this light, parliamentary privilege or the breach thereof cannot be claimed lightly. Indeed, Citation 113 of Beauchesne states specifically that a question of privilege ought rarely to come up in Parliament.

In the same citation, Beauchesne suggests that such a question should be dealt with by a motion giving the House power to impose a reparation, or impose a remedy. What reparation or what remedy would result from a referral of this question to the Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections or any other committee of the House is difficult to see.

It seems to me that the only action which could be taken would be to condemn the action of the minister, and this, I suggest, can only be done by way of a substantive motion. Again, there are many precedents to support this suggestion. My conclusion is that although the hon. member may have a grievance, or may wish to question the propriety of the minister's early announcement, there is not a prima facie case of privilege which should be investigated by a committee.

I should add that perhaps the kind of situation or circumstances to which the hon. member has alluded might very well be the subject of debate under the motion standing in the name of the Leader of the Opposition which will be considered by the House later today.

[Mr. Speaker.]

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS**COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE****CONSTITUTION OF CANADA**

First report of Special Joint Committee on the Constitution of Canada—Mr. MacGuigan.

[Translation]

TRANSPORT AND COMMUNICATIONS

Fifth and sixth reports of Standing Committee on Transport and Communications, in English and in French—Mr. Lessard.

[Editor's Note: For text of above reports see today's Votes and Proceedings.]

[English]

LIBRARY OF PARLIAMENT**REPORT OF JOINT COMMITTEE ON SALARY REVISIONS AND OPERATING REGULATIONS**

Mr. Speaker: I have the honour to lay before the House the report of the Joint Committee on the Library of Parliament concerning salary revisions for certain employees of the Library of Parliament, and regulations with relation to the operation of the parliamentary library.

[Translation]

FISHERIES**TABLING OF FIFTH REPORT OF CLERK OF PETITIONS**

Mr. Speaker: I also have the honour to inform the House that the Clerk has tabled the fifth report of the Clerk of Petitions.

[English]

EXTERNAL AFFAIRS**ANNOUNCEMENT OF RATIFICATION OF NUCLEAR NON-PROLIFERATION TREATY BY CERTAIN NATIONS**

Hon. Mitchell Sharp (Secretary of State for External Affairs): Mr. Speaker, I should like to take a few minutes of the time of the House in order to welcome an historic development marking the most important achievement to date in the field of arms control. I refer to the ceremony in Washington this morning and to the similar ceremony in Moscow today during which instruments of ratification of the nuclear non-proliferation treaty are being deposited by the United