

Economic Council of Canada

Mr. Lambert (Edmonton West): I rise on a question of privilege, Mr. Speaker. I am sorry I was moving while Your Honour was putting the motion to which the House has just agreed; I was getting back to my seat in a hurry. I had been trying to ascertain the exact title of the document which was tabled before five o'clock, because it is in connection with that document that I wish to raise my question of privilege. It is unfortunate that the minister who tabled the document is not here, but I think the House would be interested to learn that this report of the Economic Council of Canada under the very impressive title "A Report on Industrial and Intellectual Property" was disclosed to the public at a press conference at eleven o'clock this morning.

Some hon. Members: Shame.

Mr. Lambert (Edmonton West): The Economic Council has no obligation to table this document in the House at any particular time but I would point out, in connection with the question of privilege, that after this document had been released to members of the press under signature at eleven o'clock, hon. friends of ours were called up by newspapers and asked to comment on it. When they learned that the document had been released, they went to the distribution office of the House and were told they could not have the document until it had been tabled in the House. This is the point to which I wish to address my comments. I think it is absolute nonsense for any ministry or agency of government to issue any of these documents before they are tabled in the House if there are to be any restrictions on the issue of that document to hon. members until it has been tabled. That is the point I wish to make—if there is no obligation on the ministry or on the agency to table a document and there is a restriction placed thereon. I have no complaint if the department or agency issues it to the press beforehand; we may recognize that the minister is seeking publicity beforehand, but that might only be a grievance.

The question of privilege arises when members of this House are told they cannot get a document before it has been tabled, although members of the press are running around with it in their hands. They have reported to their newspapers, stories are on the wire and editors are calling local members to learn their views about it. And the members have to ask: What document? I am fed to the core with this sort of thing. We have had too much of it and the more we protest this unequal and inconsiderate treatment the more, perhaps, it will be realized that this chamber is the focal point of the operation on this Hill, not some minister's office. I do not know whether members become statesmen when they become ministers or whether they become arrogant or whether they become solid ivory between the ears but they forget, when it comes to treating members of this House, that they themselves are members of Parliament and that they are collectively responsible to this House. We shall continue to complain until they realize that they, too, are members of the House and responsible accordingly. This is my grievance and I raise it as a question of privilege on behalf of all hon. members.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

[Mr. McCleave.]

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Mr. Speaker, I do not wish to multiply words but I fully support the protest which the hon. member for Edmonton West has made. He is absolutely right.

Mr. Bell: I, too, wish to support this protest but I should like to find out whether any hon. member on the government benches is prepared to stand up and defend the ministry on this issue.

[Translation]

Mr. Albert Béchard (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Justice): The hon. member should address the House or yourself, from his seat, Mr. Speaker.

[English]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Richard): The House has heard the protest made by the hon. member for Edmonton West and others. The position has been made very clear and I think we should proceed now with the business of the Private Members' Hour.

Mr. Cullen: I am informed, Mr. Speaker, having telephoned the minister's office, that this information was given to the press for release at five o'clock.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Richard): I do not believe we should enter upon further discussion or debate on a question of this kind. The point has been made; although the minister was not here. I think it is clear from the statements presented that this was in the nature of a protest. The views of the hon. members who spoke have been made known and they will be on record in *Hansard*.

It being five o'clock, the House will now proceed to the consideration of private members' business as listed on today's Order Paper, namely public bills.

• (5:00 p.m.)

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BILLS

CANADIAN NATIONAL ENVIRONMENT WEEK

MEASURE TO MAKE PEOPLE AWARE OF ENVIRONMENTAL POLLUTION

Mr. Tom H. Goode (Burnaby-Richmond-Delta) moved the second reading of and concurrence in amendments made by the Senate to Bill C-25, respecting Canadian National Environment Week.

Mr. Stanley Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Mr. Speaker, could we be told what idea Their Honours came up with?

Mr. Goode: Certainly, Bill C-25 received second reading in the other place on March 16. The bill was sponsored there by the Hon. Alan Macnaughton, a distinguished former Speaker of this House. To him and the other hon. senators who gave sympathetic consideration to this bill I express my sincere thanks.