

Citation 82 of Beaudesne's states:

A question of privilege must be brought to the attention of the House at the first possible opportunity. Even a gap of a few days may invalidate the claim for precedence in the House.

I suggest to you, Mr. Speaker, that in that this program was shown on Tuesday evening and was but a momentary thing, if one wanted to bring a question of privilege related to it it should have been raised on Wednesday. I suggest that what we are arguing about here is a matter of debate with respect to whether and when the U.S. official had the alleged notice.

Your Honour will recall that as a result of diligent action on the part of the Government this Bill was printed on November 7. My colleague refers to a taped program shown on November 18. By my mathematics that leaves an 11-day gap during which officials would have had an opportunity to review the Bill as printed and appear on a television program.

Finally, I suggest that if this is a bona fide question of privilege which should be sent to the Standing Committee on Elections, Privileges and Procedure, then in fact we have an interesting situation. I say that because my colleagues opposite often practise a double standard in this regard. A Government document was leaked to the NDP on November 7 concerning alleged secret negotiations between Canada and the United States on automotive trade. That document was used in Question Period with no suggestion that its leak created a breach of privilege. If a leak with respect to a Bill is alleged to be a breach of privilege, then perhaps every time there is a leaked document Your Honour will find Members on the Government side suggesting that that, too, is a breach of privilege. I think one would not want that double standard to be lost in the technical arguments which I have just made.

**Mr. Speaker:** The Chair wishes to thank Hon. Members for their interventions. I will reserve on this matter which, as I have said, is a serious one. I see that the Hon. Member for Kamloops—Shuswap (Mr. Riis) is rising.

**Mr. Riis:** Mr. Speaker, I will keep my remarks brief. They refer primarily to the comments made by the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs (Mr. Andre). I wish to clear the air in that respect.

At no time would I want to suggest that the Minister himself was in direct consultation or receiving direct advice from a citizen of a foreign country. I did not state that, Mr. Speaker, and I simply do not want the Minister to suggest that he is being accused of that.

The point is that in the television interview to which we are referring it was not so much the information which came about on that particular day, which I think was the eighteenth, but the comments made by Mr. Stettler reflecting comments and discussions he had had sometime prior to that, perhaps a week, a month or a year—who knows. It was simply at that point that it became, in a sense, a public issue in Canada. The reason I did not raise it earlier was because I was primarily referring to comments made in the House regarding information which occurred in the last couple of days. So my reference was not

*Privilege—Mr. Riis*

particularly to the television program. To clarify for the Parliamentary Secretary, it was information gleaned prior to the interview that concerns us.

As the Minister has accurately stated, he not speak directly to the principles being named here today, but simply referred to the fact that, and I think he confirmed this, Mr. Stettler, the Past President of the American Pharmaceutical Association, simply stated that it appeared to him to be a better package. Perhaps he was not absolutely certain of that, he did not say. However, it appeared to him on the information that he had received from some officials within the Minister's office or Department that it was a better package.

That is why in my earlier comments I referred to the point in the precedent set in the United Kingdom which talked about budget leaks, that it was not that individuals had seen the Budget in advance, or that they had it in their possession or that they had spoken to officials about specific clauses. At times it was something as inadvertent as the Minister involved referring in an off-handed manner to an increase in tobacco tax. That was deemed to be sufficient reason for the individual to essentially step down. That is precisely why I made that particular point.

• (1250)

I appreciate having an opportunity to say a word or two about the earlier statements, just to set the record very straight. I would ask, Mr. Speaker, since you have indicated that we have had adequate input to this point, that you rule on this matter. If you feel it appropriate, I look forward to pursuing this discussion in the appropriate committee upon your reference, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Lewis:** Mr. Speaker, we have heard from the Hon. House Leader of the New Democratic Party twice and his submissions have been very helpful. I do not want to be too technical and I am sure you will be fair in your ruling, but it does seem to me that the Hon. Member has, upon having had the floor twice, failed to follow up his question of privilege with a motion, as requested in Citation 81(2) of Beaudesne's that a complaint of a breach of privilege must conclude with a motion providing the House with an opportunity to take action. This is not done upon hearing your ruling, Mr. Speaker, but upon completing one's submission. I would submit that the Hon. Member has had two opportunities to make and complete his submissions but at no time did he move a motion.

**Mr. Murphy:** Mr. Speaker, I rise on the same point of order. If we check the records of the House, we will find that many Speakers have indeed listened to presentations ending with the Hon. Member saying that if the Speaker should deem it a prima facie question of privilege, the appropriate motion could or would be made. I think we are dealing with an attempt by the Government to prevent you from coming to your own decision, Mr. Speaker.

This case has been presented at some length and the precedents that do exist have been pointed out. As well, the