

Madam Speaker, I refer to a definition of privilege of which you are aware. To refresh the memories of Members of the House of Commons, the publications to which I refer is entitled "Encyclopaedia of Parliament" by Norman Wilding and Philip Laundry. At page 582, the authors say this:

● (1250)

Disrespect to the House collectively is described by Lord Campion as "the original and fundamental form of breach of privilege"—

That is precisely the point I make with respect to what has transpired here. On the basis of whether there is a prima facie question of privilege, there is precedent in the House that the mere allegation against a Member of Parliament that there has been a breach of budget secrecy has been held by your predecessor to be a prima facie question of privilege. In that instance the question was referred to the Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections.

The second question upon which Your Honour can base your conclusion is that in this particular instance the ability of the House to deal with the budget will be severely prejudiced and, indeed, compromised by the premature revelation of the contents of the budget. That affects my privilege, Madam Speaker, and that is why I support the motion of the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Nielsen).

I am now in the position of having to deal with a matter that has been broached outside the House which has enormous economic consequences for the people of Canada. As a Member of Parliament I am not able to deal with the matter on the floor of the House of Commons except by a motion such as brought forth by the Leader of the Opposition to have the matter referred to a committee.

Whether the Minister resigns or not is incidental. Clearly, he should resign. He must resign. The question we must address is the effect of the action of the Minister on our ability to deal with budgetary matters.

Thank you for the indulgence and for recognizing me, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: I was very tempted to fill in for the Hon. Member, as his colleagues did, when he referred to that particular precedent concerning the Hon. Member for Kenora-Rainy River (Mr. Reid). I think that he knows that the Speaker then did not find a prima facie case of privilege, as in the case argued now. The matter did go to the Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections but it was at the request of the Hon. Member. He might have jumped the gun or something of that nature, but there was no ruling by the Speaker to the effect that that was a prima facie case.

Mr. Hnatyshyn: Madam Speaker, I just—

Madam Speaker: No. The Hon. Member for Calgary Centre (Mr. Andre). I would just tell the Hon. Member for Calgary Centre that, as I said, I should like to rule at two o'clock if at all possible. If the Hon. Member wants to be very brief in his remarks I will be able to rule before the Question Period, but if he chooses to go into a very lengthy elaboration

of his points, then the House will know exactly what my conduct will be in Question Period.

Mr. Nielsen: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. We consider this matter to be so serious and of such gravity that we are prepared to discuss it for as long as is necessary to satisfy ourselves that the Chair is in possession of all the arguments. Some of these have not yet been made, particularly those having to do with markets and the effect of the breach by the Minister of Finance, the predisclosure of budget information, on those markets. We are prepared to continue the discussion at two o'clock even though we realize the consequences of adopting that course.

I do not suggest for a moment that it is even the intention of the Chair, but I would urge the Chair not to cut off discussion at this stage. If we do not finish in six minutes I urge the Chair to allow discussion to continue at the time when Question Period would normally take place.

Because of the gravity of the issue there must be sufficient evidence put before the Chair. There is still much to come by way of the effect of the predisclosure on the markets of the country. I urge the Chair not to make any attempt rapidly to conclude this discussion.

Mr. Pinard: Madam Speaker, very respectfully, I think the Leader of the Opposition is not in a position to urge anybody to do anything, especially the Speaker of the House. We know that you have total discretion to decide after a certain time if you have heard enough or not to make your ruling.

I submit that we on this side will respect your freedom or discretion. As far as we are concerned we find that a lot of time has been wasted so far, and certainly you are in a position to interrupt debate.

Madam Speaker: In reply to the remarks of the Hon. Leader of the Opposition, I just want to say that I would not allow matters dealing with the effects of these alleged revelations on the stock market to be advanced as arguments to determine the question of privilege. These are the types of arguments which, I must say, have been invoked in the course of some of the presentations but I have let them go by. The matter of determining what effects this would have on the stock market or any other sector of the economy would be the kind of argument that could be advanced once a prima facie case of privilege has been found.

I have reminded Hon. Members constantly that one of the reasons that would bring me to cut off debate would be if Members enter into debate of the question of privilege as if the Chair had found a prima facie case of privilege. The debate does not take place before, it takes place after that. To this point Members have not elaborated, as I have urged them, on the relationship between this particular matter and the question of privilege. Therefore I will not allow argument on the matter of the stock market. That is not relevant to this particular phase of the debate. It could be relevant afterwards but not now.