

Immigration

appears to have been confirmed by the intervention of the Secretary of State for External Affairs (Mr. Jamieson).

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Speaker: It being a matter of disagreement between the two hon. members it would not warrant further action in respect of a question of privilege, within the classic definition of which this does not fall.

● (1510)

Mr. Crosbie: Mr. Speaker—

Some hon. Members: Sit down!

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. I have indicated that what the hon. member for St. John's West has raised is essentially disagreement between two hon. members which, if he will consult the precedents, he will realize does not constitute a question of privilege. Whatever the nature of the disagreement, the purpose of raising a question of privilege is not to permit a dialogue between the two hon. members or further debate on the question, or in fact to give the minister an opportunity to respond to the member's complaints. The question for the Chair is whether or not the member's complaints constitute a question of privilege. My ruling is that they constitute a disagreement between two hon. members and a difference of interpretation of the statements given and the circumstances surrounding them. That does not constitute a question of privilege.

Mr. Crosbie: Mr. Speaker—

Some hon. Members: Sit down!

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[English]

IMMIGRATION ACT, 1976

AMENDMENTS TO IMPLEMENT CHANGES IN IMMIGRATION POLICY

Hon. Jack Cullen (Minister of Manpower and Immigration) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-24, respecting immigration to Canada.

Motion agreed to, bill read the first time and ordered to be printed.

Mr. Epp: I rise on a point of order, Mr. Speaker, regarding the presentation of the immigration bill by the Minister of Manpower and Immigration (Mr. Cullen) just a moment ago. With your indulgence I believe it is necessary, in order to explain my point of order, to give a little of the background about what happened prior to this point in time.

Approximately two years ago the government published a green paper on immigration, which was a comprehensive study of immigration patterns of the past as well as an outline of the options the government saw that Canadians had available to them regarding future immigration. Subsequent to the tabling of the green paper a reference was made to a special joint committee of both Houses of this parliament to study immigration. As a member of that committee I had the privilege, along with other members of this House and of the other place, to travel across Canada and receive the views of individual Canadians as well as of groups with a special interest in immigration. Following those extensive hearings across Canada the members re-assembled in Ottawa and wrote a report which was presented to both Houses of this parliament.

This brings me to the point of time of last night and today. Last night, and again this morning in the media, especially in the electronic media, specific provisions of the immigration bill were outlined to the Canadian public. In fact if one checks the specifics in the bill as outlined through the electronic media last night with the highlights which accompany the package which is tabled with the bill today by the minister, one finds not only are they the same but that they are identical in word and in structure. That simply brings me to the point that there is a tradition and a precedent in this House that bills not be presented to the public before they are presented to the House. Not only is this a tradition and precedent, it is a standing rule of parliament through the ages that bills are confidential until they receive first reading in the House of Commons.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I can only conclude that either directly, or without the minister wanting to see too much of what is happening in his department, specific leaks were given so that the media could present to the public the specific provisions of the bill.

I say to the minister that up to this point, as with the former minister, now the President of the Treasury Board (Mr. Andras), co-operation has been the order in respect to this committee. I think members on both sides of the House will agree on this. That co-operation can no longer be asked for or expected if the minister goes ahead and presents the provisions of the bill to the media and again shows as this government so often does in its many procedures that parliament is not important and is secondary to its own purposes. This is a shoddy action and one that is definitely not worthy of the minister considering the co-operation he expects.

Mr. Cullen: Mr. Speaker, I take second place to no person in the House of Commons concerning my respect for this Chamber. I am fully familiar with the precedent that has been established, and I think the appropriate precedent that has been established, that bills and the contents thereof, or comments on them, should not be introduced until they are tabled in the House at first reading.

On more than one occasion it has been suggested to me in the course of my career that this might be a good time to do something this way or that way, and I have indicated I would