

those on the opposition side in a very practical day to day dealing sense with regard to the Auditor General's report.

Since I began my activities in the House I have sensed that there is a wish on all sides that there be pre-budget reviews and pre-Auditor General report reviews. However, there is great uncertainty as to what should be the proper form. To what extent should people actually be locked up? To what extent should they be allowed to leave prior to a certain hour? To what extent should they be allowed to take documents with them?

If Your Honour accepts my suggestion to have this referred to the Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections, I hope there will be some in depth study, not just on the immediate problem that I say confronted me on November 23 with regard to this declaration, but that the committee widen the reference and look at what would be suitable guidelines for all members of parliament to live by with regard to in-camera or lock-up sessions, with special reference to the budgetary side and the Auditor General's type of reporting.

● (1522)

This has come up previously. In 1976 the then minister of finance, Mr. Macdonald, stated on March 31, for example:

—I think it would be very useful if the House in general could give some consideration to the broader question as to whether the procedures that have been followed historically in this parliament, in Westminster with regard to budgets might be reviewed with the object referred to by the hon. member—

That is, myself.

—of having a more open scrutiny of the government's economic and fiscal planning, and either in the context of that discussion or perhaps with a special reference to the standing committee it would be of value if we could review the budget procedures and decide whether the time has not come now to make such changes in Canada.

I could go on, sir, and read the comments made by the minister of finance. That comment was made on March 31 and reported on page 12,319 of *Hansard*. He said, in general, that there must be a better way to have pre-budget reviews. Again, in his budget of May 25 that year, he specifically recommended a review be made and suggested that he and the House leader come up with a suitable plan.

In the budget debate which followed on June 8, a former minister of finance, the then hon. member for Eglinton, Mr. Sharp, dealt at length with the problems I am touching on here. His comments may be found at page 14,290 of *Hansard* for June 8. He referred to what was going on as an affront. He said:

It is an affront, and I trust that come next budget there will be a demand from all sides of the House that this farce will not be permitted to recur.

The farce he was referring to was the Minister of Finance rising in his place to speak at the same time that the press outside were on radio and TV running the actual budget speech as if it had been delivered. I believe there is a growing uneasiness within the House concerning such things as the so-called lock-up—the pre-budget submission, the pre-budget discussions—and now, with the tabling of the Auditor-General's report, the whole question of a lock-up prior to that report being tabled in the House.

Privilege—Mr. Stevens

I think everybody meant well, but in my view a reference to the privileges committee would be in order to try to get the question aired. If you find I do have a question of privilege, sir, I would propose that there be a reference to the Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections based on the requirements set out in the declaration drafted by the Auditor General, dated November 23, 1978, to determine whether my privilege as an MP and all privileges of MPs in this House were in fact infringed by the proposed declaration.

Hon. Donald C. Jamieson (Secretary of State for External Affairs): Mr. Speaker, I quite agree with the hon. member that this is an important matter to discuss. He has in effect raised two distinct issues in the same context of privilege. One is the question of the document which it was suggested ought to have been signed vis-à-vis the Auditor General's report. Then he has used that incident to raise the larger question of lock-ups and general restraint on members where documents or actions in the House are being anticipated or are likely to occur within a matter of a few hours.

On the first question which prompted his intervention at this time, it appears to me that the matter is one for the Auditor General himself. It is my information that this was a decision of the Auditor General and that the wording concerned was drafted by him. I can assure the House that neither the government nor, to my knowledge, any member on this side, was involved in that particular exercise in any way. The Auditor General is, after all, a servant of parliament, and therefore in this context his relationship is directly with the public accounts committee. I would have thought the arrangement in that case would have been worked out between all the members of the committee and the Auditor General.

I emphasize again that this is a special case and I am not at all certain, though I have no intention of intruding on your jurisdiction, that it is a matter for parliament to decide, or a matter for the Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections. That would be something for Your Honour to judge.

On the broader question, I think the hon. member for York-Simcoe (Mr. Stevens) has brought up something that merits discussion. But once again I am not certain that we would accomplish everything that I suspect most members of the House desire by going through the instrument of the committee on privileges and elections. Many of these matters are not specifically or directly involved with the parliamentary process. I am thinking, for example, of royal commission reports of various kinds. There is a whole range of documents of one type or another which, from time to time, are authored by people who are not officers of parliament or, indeed, who may not be officials of the government, and I am not certain, therefore, that a committee of this House could properly set down rules of procedure in that regard.

I can recall, over the many years I have spent here, a number of occasions when various commissions and groups which have been assigned tasks by certain departments, or by the government as a whole, have created considerable furore through the premature leak, as it is called, of the contents of their reports to elements of the media or to particular mem-