

*Privilege—Mr. Huntington*

appropriate channels, the way in which a procedure can be established, satisfactory to all sides of the House of Commons, so that we would continue the expansion of the matter of openness with respect to the plans of government.

I did not think there was any unwillingness on the part of the President of the Treasury Board with respect to that. As a matter of fact, I think he was discussing that point with the President of the Privy Council (Mr. Pinard) when they were sitting together a little while ago, and I hope that would be the case. I hope that the Chair would recognize the position of Members of Parliament, and especially the critic for the Treasury Board, on the day on which these estimates are brought forward, who must leave this place or deal with a statement, but who must leave this place and deal intelligently in the public press with a media that has been prepared by a briefing.

I think a sense of fairness would be realized and accomplished if in the case—whether or not you find a question of privilege later on, I cannot comment on—but whether or not you do, if this matter was held in abeyance so that through the usual channels we might discuss continuing the expansion that has gone on and has been spoken to today with respect to the rights of Members of Parliament to do their job, because that is our job, in terms of government expenditures; in fact, it is our responsibility. It is not a question, Madam Speaker, of denying the press these rights because Members of Parliament do not have them; it is a matter of expanding the rights of Members of Parliament.

I hope that my friend, and the House leader of the New Democratic Party, would be agreeable to discussing this matter, holding in abeyance, of course, the question of privilege and reserving on it until we have had a chance to explore it.

**Madam Speaker:** I am afraid that if I do not try to put an end to this debate, it will be quite impossible for hon. members from all parties to be performing their duties that are coming up in the form of questions to the President of the Treasury Board (Mr. Johnston). If too much time is taken up now, it will cut in on the time that hon. members will have later in the day to ask questions.

So, because of that, I will try to put an end to this debate and say this much about it. The issue has been before the House several times—the hon. member for Capilano (Mr. Huntington) did give me notice and I did have a chance to look at other circumstances when this question was debated in the House—it has come up several times.

My immediate predecessor, after looking at all the arguments presented to him, was very reluctant to find a prima facie case of privilege in similar circumstances. I am inclined to agree with him that this does not constitute a question of privilege on the basis that members' duties do not require them—speaking of one hon. member in particular—to go to such a lock-up. This is not specifically one of the requirements of his duties. Therefore, it would be difficult to find a breach of privilege based on the fact that he was not invited to attend a lock-up. It is true that the hon. member was denied advan-

tages which would have accrued from his attending such a lock-up, but that privilege was denied all other members of this House.

I appreciate the argument that the hon. member, as the official opposition critic, and the official critic of the New Democratic Party, will have to discuss these things quite early once the estimates are known to him and known to the House. I appreciate that, and that is an argument I certainly have weighed, but the advantage has been denied everybody. I am looking at privileges in this House, and I do not think one can say that the ability of the hon. member to perform his duties in the House has been impaired by the fact that he has not been able to attend the lock-up.

● (1550)

Hon. members have referred to procedures which are different in the case of the Auditor General's report. I simply make the distinction that the Auditor General's report is perhaps a special case because the Auditor General is answerable directly to Parliament. However, I have to take cognizance of the fact that procedures seem to be quite different from the budget to the estimates to the Auditor General's report, and perhaps the House would benefit from the standardization of those procedures. However, it is not for me to determine that. For that reason, and because nothing in our Standing Orders allows me to make a judgment that there would be a prima facie case of privilege, I will rule right now that this is not privilege, despite the fact that the hon. member for Nepean-Carleton (Mr. Baker) pleaded with me to keep the matter in abeyance.

Even if I say now that this is not a question of privilege, that does not preclude consultation between different members of this House in order to see whether some procedure, which would be satisfactory to all, might not be adopted or to examine whether these procedures should be standardized.

I noticed that hon. members referred constantly to a matter of courtesy. I will not say whether it would be a courtesy or something else, but I think it is up to the members themselves to get together and determine what procedure should be followed in these cases. It would help the Chair if hon. members did because the Chair is constantly asked to rule on this when there is no basis on which the Chair is able to rule on it.

I rule that this is not a question of privilege but urge hon. members to discuss this and consult each other, if they so desire.

**Mr. Arnold Malone (Crowfoot):** Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I have heard your ruling and, of course, I cannot respond with respect to that ruling. I am well aware of that. I note the question of privilege, and I just wish to bring to your attention that the whole reason Parliament was started in the first place was so that Parliament could scrutinize the King's purse.

**Madam Speaker:** Order, please. I am sorry. The hon. member is reflecting on my ruling. I do not think we can go