

Privilege—Mr. Sargeant

As soon as we can get to printing the report, it will be printed and made available to the House.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yvon Pinard (Drummond): Mr. Speaker, a motion under the provision of Standing Order 43 to have this report tabled was unanimously passed by the House. That was a long time ago, and day after day my colleague from Saint-Léonard-Anjou keeps asking the same question and getting told that inquiries are being made. I respectfully submit, Mr. Speaker, that that is not the personal problem of the hon. member. The House of Commons has the right to have that report tabled; we made a decision, Parliament decided, that has force of law. I do not accept the explanations given by the hon. President of the Privy Council (Mr. Baker) who passes the buck to a parliamentary secretary. And they would have us again believe that it is a matter of translation, a matter of printing, which is unacceptable. Parliament has ways of acting and doing so rapidly. In 1979, no one is going to have me believe that it is impossible to translate a document when Parliament unanimously decides to have it tabled. That was decided several days ago, Mr. Speaker. If it was a matter of two or three days, I would not raise the issue but—

Miss Bégin: Five weeks.

Mr. Pinard: My colleague points out that it is a matter of four to five weeks, which is totally unacceptable. I ask the Chair to give strict instructions to the government to take all necessary steps to have the will of Parliament obeyed and have that document tabled by next Monday at the latest.

[*English*]

Mr. Speaker: The point is well taken: there has been an order of the House. I will look into the matter and see whether or not the House might, therefore, insist that the document be tabled. I am sure that the answer will be that the document exists at the present time only in the English language. Therefore, the House would have to accept that tabling and undertake the translation on its own. That may be the more prudent course.

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PRIVILEGE

MR. SARGEANT—PROPOSED RCMP SEARCH—INQUIRY AS TO AUTHORIZATION

Mr. Terry Sargeant (Selkirk-Interlake): Mr. Speaker, I wish to raise a question of privilege regarding the rights and privileges of all members of this House on a matter of which, I am sure, you are already aware. I would like to draw your attention to two questions I asked earlier of the Prime Minister (Mr. Clark) concerning the guidelines authorizing RCMP searches for leaked documents.

Initially, by way of a news conference, we were told by the Prime Minister that he would make these documents public.

[Mr. Schellenberger]

Later in the House the Prime Minister stated that there was some confusion as to the authorization of the guidelines. This past Monday we learned that the guidelines were never authorized and, consequently, it would not be the intention of the Prime Minister to table them.

On the matter of the raid on the home of an Ottawa journalist, both the Prime Minister and the Minister of National Defence (Mr. McKinnon) have publicly indicated their criticisms of the way in which this matter has been handled.

My question of privilege, Mr. Speaker, is this. Yesterday I learned that the RCMP had requested permission from yourself to search my office for copies of a leaked document I have had in my possession. I do not believe that a member of Parliament is above the law, but as you, sir, pointed out to the RCMP when they contacted you, I am not guilty of any wrongdoing and, therefore, there should be no need for such a search. For your support and the support of the House leaders, I offer my thanks.

But who is in charge of this government? The Prime Minister and the Minister of National Defence are opposed to this line of pursuit by the RCMP. The Prime Minister has stated that guidelines that permitted the earlier raid were never sanctioned by his government or the previous government. On what authority can the RCMP now request permission to search an office for leaked documents? Who is making these decisions?

• (1230)

I believe that my rights and privileges will be affected by any search of my office for information it is not unlawful for me to have. Should any search be allowed, my relationship with my constituents will be adversely affected and so, too, will the rights and privileges of all members of this House. Was it the Solicitor General (Mr. Lawrence), the Prime Minister or the Minister of National Defence who authorized the RCMP to seek permission from Your Honour to search my office?

Is it the policy of this government, without prima facie evidence, to authorize RCMP officers to set out on fishing expeditions in the offices of members of Parliament? If that is indeed the policy of this government, it sets a precedent that breaks the deep-rooted traditions of this House concerning the very rights and privileges of members of this Parliament and the traditions that form the very cornerstone of our parliamentary democracy.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The hon. member for Selkirk-Interlake (Mr. Sargeant) raises a matter by way of privilege which, of course, I will set aside as a privileged matter. I think if he re-examines the matter he will understand that he speaks of a potential risk. Indeed, he says himself "if permission were to be granted" or if a search were to be allowed of his office, that has not taken place, as he has already pointed out. He therefore raises the risk of an event taking place in the future. I could scarcely regard the very risk of that as a matter of privilege.