

Until such time as the committee reports to the House, it is not possible to discuss it here.

Mr. Munro (Esquimalt-Saanich): With due respect, Madam Speaker, a question of privilege cannot be ruled upon in the committee. As I said, it was the last item of business in committee and involved the imminent destruction of parliamentary records which, to my way of thinking, are historical records that must be preserved.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. If a question of privilege is raised in committee, the committee can report it back to the House. If the committee determines there is a question of privilege, it can be properly recorded and brought into the House where it can be dealt with. Therefore, I cannot hear the hon. member on this kind of question of privilege.

Mr. Munro (Esquimalt-Saanich): With all due respect, Madam Speaker—

Some hon. Members: Order.

Mr. Munro (Esquimalt-Saanich): The report had been submitted, voted upon and approved. I cannot see how else I can preserve documents for the archives and the history of Canada other than by raising this for Your Honour to rule on or have it referred to a committee. Failing that, I would implore Your Honour to put a stay on the destruction of those documents until I can formulate a proper presentation for the appropriate place, wherever that may be. They are parliamentary documents and I do not want to see them disappear.

Hon. Erik Nielsen (Yukon): Madam Speaker, may I just speak briefly in the abstract of that question. The question involves the preservation of parliamentary records. Ordinarily the records of any committee proceeding eventually find their way into the report of the proceedings of that committee and then into the Library and other repositories, the same as the record of our debates. There are occasions, however, where a record is kept of the deliberations of any one of a number of the standing committees, but that record is never published.

When a record is kept of the proceedings in camera, I believe it is normally preserved. That may bear some scrutiny in respect of the policies of the officers of this House about the treatment of parliamentary documents. I might suggest that the point raised by the hon. member for Esquimalt-Saanich (Mr. Munro) in this specific instance might be inquired into in light of whether or not it is desirable, where a record of in camera proceedings is kept, that record should be preserved as a general principle or as a policy of the House, in camera, of course in secret, and subject to the usual rules of release, which I understand now is some 30 years.

I am not aware whether the House policy now is to preserve records of in camera proceedings when they are kept, but there have been occasions when records have been kept of those proceedings. I dare say there are instances where those records can still be found. I suggest the point raised by the hon. member for Esquimalt-Saanich is certainly important enough to be taken under consideration by the Chair and perhaps in

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the process of determining global policy, the specific instance might be inquired into.

Mr. D. M. Collenette (Parliamentary Secretary to President of the Privy Council): Madam Speaker, while this point was being raised, I tried to look up the precedents. I believe this is amply covered in Citation 615 of Beauchesne's where it is unequivocally stated:

The clerk of the committee is responsible for the safekeeping of all the papers and records of the committee.

I would take that to mean records of anything done in camera as well as on the public record.

Madam Speaker: That is a matter which can probably be checked, but it seems to me that none of those documents are ever destroyed. This proves the point that matters dealing with deliberations of a committee should not be raised in this House. The House is totally unaware of what went on and is unable to judge the matter in question. I am at a loss as to what to do with this question of privilege. Perhaps the hon. member will give me proper notice and some idea of what the facts are so that I can see whether it is proper to raise it in the House. If it is, the hon. member can raise his question of privilege and I will rule on it at that time.

Mr. Munro (Esquimalt-Saanich): It was my intention, Madam Speaker, in view of your ruling today that you could not accept it, to ask that I be allowed to raise this matter on another occasion. I hope to be able to do so. Meanwhile, I want to make it clear that in raising this matter, I am not casting any aspersions, none whatever, on the co-chairmen. It was a decision of the committee, not the co-chairmen. I want that on the record.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[English]

Hon. Yvon Pinard (President of the Privy Council): Madam Speaker, possibly with unanimous consent you could call questions on the Order Paper before I move my motion.

Madam Speaker: Does the House agree that I proceed with the usual proceedings before the President of the Privy Council (Mr. Pinard) moves his motion?

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

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QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

(Questions answered orally are indicated by an asterisk.)

Mr. D. M. Collenette (Parliamentary Secretary to President of the Privy Council): Madam Speaker, the following questions will be answered today: Nos. 250, 747, 1,833 and 1,875.