

## Week-long ban too harsh says McKie-leak MSP

EDINBURGH MSP Mike Pringle, who is facing a week's suspension from Holyrood over leaked information, today claimed the penalty was too harsh for the offence.

The Scottish Parliament's standards committee ruled the Edinburgh South Liberal Democrat had breached the MSPs' code of conduct by showing a document relating to the Shirley McKie fingerprint case to a Sunday newspaper.

It recommended he should be barred from meetings of the Scottish Parliament for a week after he admitted the leak. The committee also said he should consider quitting the Justice 1 Committee.

Mr Pringle said he accepted the committee's decision but was shocked at the proposed sanction. "I think it is harsh," he said. "I said immediately it was me and I apologised to everyone."

He claimed the leak only took place because he had been given the impression the committee clerks had agreed he should release the information. He pointed out the committee had already agreed to publish the document and it came out ten days later.

### LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

## Block on free speech

The standards committee's decision to recommend a ban on Mike Pringle, MSP, from all Scottish Parliament meetings for a week is a worrying development for those who value free speech (your report, 21 September).

This "punishment for leaking confidential papers to a Sunday newspaper" in connection with the Scottish Criminal Records Office fingerprint scandal might show a strict adherence to a "technical breach" of parliamentary procedures, but lacks any understanding of the issues behind the breach or any sense of fairness.

My question to those charged with voting on the committee's recommendation is: "Will this decision serve the public interest or the self-serving interests of those who seek to prevent the truth ever coming out?"

I believe important principles are at stake here and hope our MSPs and the media will stand shoulder to shoulder with Mr Pringle in arguing that any technical breach is far outweighed by the need for the truth in this shambles to finally be revealed. I hope this latest threat to democracy is challenged and challenged quickly.

**IAIN AJ McKIE**  
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**The  Herald**

### **Suspension of MSP for leaking information**

Given that the SCRO fingerprint scandal is now reaching Shakespearean proportions it is totally appropriate that the advice from Henry IV of, 'Don't shoot the messenger', is being ignored by our country's leaders as a recommendation goes before the Scottish Parliament that MSP Mike Pringle be suspended for leaking information to a newspaper.

More surprising is Robin Dinwoddie's revelation, 'in a hearing yesterday reminiscent of a court martial, MSPs of all parties spoke against him.' ( 21 September)

What is going on?

My understanding is that the breach is technical one given that the information was posted on the Parliament website a few days later. True to himself Mr Pringle accepts total responsibility for his actions.

What a pity that others involved in this saga had not done the same.

While those within the Scottish Executive who have presided over 9 years of cover-up and procrastination continue to escape Scot free one of the MSP's who has acted with honesty and integrity throughout this whole affair is pilloried.

Please tell where the 'public interest' is represented in this latest action.

Yet again, as in the Executive's refusal to hand over 1200 documents to me under the so called Freedom of Information Act, it is clear that the only interests being served are those of the incestuous cabal of police, politicians and Crown Office personnel responsible for this shambles.

Yet again the parliament is in danger of proving that it is a toothless tiger serving narrow self interest rather than the good of Scotland's people.

I hope this latest threat to democracy is challenged and challenged quickly.

Yours faithfully,

**Iain A J McKie,  
27 Donnini Court, South Beach Road, Ayr.**