

Privilege—Mr. Valcourt

Canadians. This morning, Mr. Speaker, our caucus got up early; we were earlier than usual, raring to go.

An Hon. Member: Is your conscience bothering you?

Mr. Valcourt: No, I have a clear conscience. I would like to be able to say as much for you!

Mr. Speaker, I listened to ordinary citizens on an open-line radio show, first in English. Seven people called: seven Canadians, ordinary people whom they love to claim to represent, who voted for us on November 21. These people were saying: "Michael Wilson, the Minister of Finance, resign? Not on your life! He should not resign!" Because Michael Wilson cannot be held responsible for a criminal act that someone else committed. Canadians understand that. They understand that in Madawaska, they understand that in New Brunswick, they understand that in Gaspé, they understand that in Bellechasse and they understand that in Kelowna too. They understand that everywhere. But when you have partisan interests that go beyond the famous principles of "Parliamentary traditions", those people don't give a damn about traditions.

The finest British Parliamentary traditions are not what concerns them. What they are asking you to do, Mr. Speaker, is to hold the Finance Minister guilty for something someone else did. You are being asked to push the principles of British Parliamentary traditions to a ridiculous extreme. You are being asked to forget the principles of fairness that underlie the British Parliamentary system. You are being asked, Mr. Speaker, to forget the principles of common sense and the "reasonable person" test that underlies the British Parliamentary system and in fact all common law. You are being asked to ignore that.

An Hon. Member: A prudent administrator.

Mr. Valcourt: You are being asked to ignore that. In Québec, it is called the *bon père de famille*—it is the criterion used. There, it is the "reasonable person". It made sense in Québec and everywhere else. What you are being asked to do is to say that although the Minister of Finance took all the normal security measures that a reasonable person—

Some Hon. Members: No.

Mr. Valcourt: The clowns say no, but they have no evidence. All they know is that someone got hold of a document, and the Minister of Finance said it was not a member of his staff. Someone did it. The police is investigating, and we will have to wait and see. We are not going to speculate on the outcome of this investigation. We will leave that to our hon. friends opposite. What the Chair is being asked to do is to extend those principles well beyond our tradition. And when they talk about tradition, they talk about precedents.

• (1540)

Mr. Speaker, I am an Acadian from New Brunswick. I studied law at the University of New Brunswick, and I know about precedents. The precedents these people are talking about, and I would ask you, Mr. Speaker, to consider them—First of all, according to my modest legal training, for a precedent to be applicable, it must apply to all the facts of the matter at issue. A precedent must deal with facts that are similar, and the principles of law must also apply. In this case, what they are asking the Chair to do is to ignore the difference between the precedents to which they refer and the situation before us today.

In 1936, in the United Kingdom, and the Leader of the Opposition, the Whip says: Oh, wow! When I heard his Leader last night, I also said: Wow! He hasn't improved. He was talking—

An Hon. Member: You weren't even born in 1936!

Mr. Valcourt: No, I wasn't, and maybe—

An Hon. Member: It shows!

Mr. Valcourt: I could say the same about you. The Hon. Member is one of the old timers. Maybe he has been around for too long—Sometimes they tend to forget.

In any case, when in 1936, it was found after an investigation that a minister had shared his knowledge of the Budget with someone else for that person's benefit, he had to resign. Has any Member opposite alleged that the Minister of Finance knew that he had revealed information on the Budget to a third party? If anyone wants to make that charge, let him put his seat on the line! But that is not what they are saying.