

Tributes

As one of his constituents, I knew Tom for nearly 20 years. He worked very hard for his riding and was always attentive to his constituents' needs. He lived his whole life in politics because politics was his life. For me, this is a very sad day.

• (1210)

[English]

I was very saddened to hear of Tom's passing today, and I call him Tom with all respect because everybody always called him Tom in the riding.

He treated each and every one equally, he listened carefully to all constituents.

I would like to pass on deepest sympathy and condolences on behalf of all constituents of Pontiac-Gatineau—Labelle, whom he served so well, and myself to his dear wife Lea, and to his children Lise, Guy and Jean.

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PRIVILEGE**PRESIDENT OF THE TREASURY BOARD**

Mr. Don Boudria (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell): Point of privilege, Madam Speaker. I am sorry to rise suddenly on this issue but it is of utmost importance and it is a point of privilege.

At the same time as my colleagues and I were standing in this House moments ago to pay our respects to a colleague who has just passed on, the staff of the President of the Treasury Board was handing out details of budgetary cuts in the hallway outside this Parliament instead of tabling them in this Parliament.

If the Chair would review the definition of contempt on page 143, chapter 10, of Erskine May's 20th edition, I would submit that the actions taken by the government, more particularly the President of the Treasury Board, are in contempt of this House.

Clearly these actions show the most disrespect for this Parliament when a document of this nature announcing major budgetary cuts to a whole variety of government departments is not tabled in the House but distributed to the press in the scrum area by the staff of the President of the Treasury Board at the same time as we are sitting, in particular on the issue we were discussing at the time the incident happened.

This reeks of disrespect for this Parliament.

I call upon the government House leader to avail himself of that information, to speak to his colleague, and I would ask the Speaker to rule on this issue at the appropriate moment. I submit that this is clearly in contempt of Parliament. This goes against our practices. Never would we do anything like this in the past on any occasion, let alone the occasion we are living through right now.

Hon. Harvie Andre (Minister of State and Leader of the Government in the House of Commons): Madam Speaker, I have never heard a more irrelevant or inaccurate suggestion of what is a point of privilege or contempt of the House.

Apparently what the President of the Treasury Board is guilty of is informing the public through the media, which is the messenger we use, of some actions taken by the Treasury Board.

I am really dumbfounded as to what is behind the indignation of the hon. member. Is he suggesting that any government action, anything taken by any minister, must never be communicated to the media or to the public, to those affected, except by way of tabling a document in the House of Commons?

Frankly I am quite astounded by the hon. member's raising this point. I listened to his speech this morning on the motion he has on the floor and I would really wonder how respectful of Parliament that was.

I am not raising a point of privilege on it. That is part of the partisan debate that goes on around here all the time; perhaps the kind of debate that does not give the public a great deal of respect for this institution but it happens nonetheless.

I have to say dismiss out of hand any notion that somehow it is an offence for a minister and/or his staff to make comments about or inform the affected public and the media of actions taken within that minister's department.

Mr. Rod Murphy (Churchill): Madam Speaker, I do not believe that this is a question of privilege or a point of order.

The problem here is that there were questions during Question Period on the economy on what the government is going to do. In none of the answers from the ministers, including the minister whose department released the letter, did they indicate that this action was