

Mr. Nielsen: I have a point of clarification, Madam Speaker. I doubt if it would have been proper for me to provide you with a copy of an intended motion prior to raising the question. I want to point out that I would not propose the matter be referred to a standing committee of the House. The British have no standing committees and that is the reason a select committee was struck for this purpose.

If a *prima facie* case is found, I suggest that a special committee be appointed to inquire into all the circumstances, and then the wording would follow that I read into the record before. I do not suggest that it go to the Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections but that a special committee be struck for that purpose.

Hon. Allan Lawrence (Durham-Northumberland): Madam Speaker, I want to say to you at the very outset that I rise most sincerely with a feeling of sorrow that a matter such as this has to come before the House of Commons on a day such as this. I must say to you also that my indignation—and I think it is a righteous indignation—is such that I know very well, as we proceed this morning in a discussion and debate about this matter, that, as you always do, you will step in and attempt to restrain those of us who feel—and I must say this as strongly as I can—a very real sense of outrage in respect of the procedures and what has happened.

Quite frankly, I found your first question to my colleague the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Nielsen) rather curious in respect to the whole question of the resignation of the Minister involved. I say that I found it rather curious because in your mind, I submit to you, and in the independence and impartial position you hold as the first Commoner in this country, the whole question of the resignation and the timing of the resignation of the Minister of Finance (Mr. Lalonde)—no matter how much we demand it here and how heated the debate may become today and this evening—is really irrelevant as far as the question you have to answer is concerned.

I submit to you with the utmost respect that the question you have to answer, regardless of the Minister and his resignation, is whether there has been a *prima facie* case of a leak of budget secrets, in which case it is a *prima facie* case in accordance with precedents in this country, in Great Britain and other Commonwealth countries, which go to prove that there is a breach of the privileges of the House.

The resignation of the Minister—even though I intend to demand it here and now, and later today perhaps by another means before the House—and the delay of the budget presentation tonight, which I submit personally and not on behalf of my colleagues, is now required as a result of what happened yesterday afternoon in the Minister's office, is quite irrelevant to the matter that you have to focus on.

I suggest to you that the Dalton case alone in Great Britain is such that the Speaker there found there was a *prima facie* case just by virtue of the leak of budget information. That was enough. In actual fact, by the time that occurred the Minister had already resigned. I would hope that the Minister here has

already resigned. That may or may not be the case, but it is quite irrelevant to the point you have to focus on.

Why is this a breach of the privileges of this House? I ask you, Madam Speaker, why do we have extraordinary provisions in regard to our procedures for the presentation of a budget—quite extraordinary procedures? We have a set time which is set apart completely from the normal hours of the House for a budget presentation. Why is that? It is so that the budget presentation may not be known to anyone or acted upon by anyone during the normal course of business hours as far as the North American and European markets are concerned.

We feel, the House of Commons collectively, that we have upset our normal and traditional hours of dealing with ministerial statements so that that can be done at a time quite apart from our normal hours of business. It can be done only in a manner in which the first public pronouncement that is made in respect of those budget provisions is made here in the House, at a time at which normal, ordinary commercial transactions cannot be affected.

Madam Speaker: The Hon. Member is now pursuing an argument which it is hard for me to conceive as being related to the question of privilege. I made the point that he made before, and that is that there might be a relationship between the resignation of the Minister of Finance and the question of privilege. There might be but there is not necessarily a relationship. I think the Hon. Member has just now made that same point.

I would appreciate it if the Hon. Member would remain on the element that constitutes privilege so that the Chair would be in a better position to rule on this particular matter. The Chair feels that it must rule before the end of this sitting. If it is at all possible I will try to do that. In light of other events that should occur today, I think it is important that the matter be resolved one way or the other.

Mr. Lawrence: Madam Speaker, I am very pleased that the Chair is taking the attitude that this is a matter that cannot be delayed and that there has to be the fullest discussion before Your Honour today, and that in the normal course of events Your Honour will rule on this matter before eight o'clock tonight or perhaps even a little after if the House continues with the discussion. I hope the House will have the fullest opportunity of discussing the matter before there is an intimation from the Chair on the matter on which the Chair is ruling.

The point is that regardless of the Minister's resignation, surely a discussion is going to be allowed on the circumstances of the actual budget leak. That is the point on which the question of privilege is based. I suggest to the Chair that that certainly is the nub and root of the matter—whether or not the leak is important enough that it should be discussed and considered by a committee of the House.

I only have to emphasize that in the economic debate that is swirling around this place and other governments in the western world in the last six months, the big question has been whether Government policy will be a restrictive one in order to