

other Minister, was responsible for acts of theft against the officials or the officers who were under the responsibility of that Minister. If such a finding were to be made, it would certainly invite anyone who was interested in setting off course any Budget at any time in the future by that type of frivolous action. That interpretation of that principle simply is not an interpretation that can apply.

• (1620)

The other point to which I want to turn some attention has to do with the question as to the response of the House, particularly of the Opposition Parties to the request that the House of Commons be allowed to meet once this extraordinary situation had arisen to allow the Budget to be introduced so we could avoid or limit any of the kinds of concerns that may have arisen as a result of the theft of the document.

There has been some concern expressed about when the Government knew the detail of information that was entering into the public domain. It is important we make that quite clear. The House rose yesterday at six o'clock. My colleague, the House Leader, sought to have an extension of hours for reasons that were explained—

Ms. Copps: On Bill C-9.

Mr. Clark (Yellowhead): —during the Question Period this afternoon.

Ms. Copps: That is a lie. It is a cover-up.

Mr. Clark (Yellowhead): What was known before the House rose was that a reporter for Global Television was alleging, without himself believing he had enough proof, that a leak had occurred. There were two broadcasts, Mr. Speaker, by Global. Those two broadcasts related to different levels of detail which were in the hands of Global TV and its reporters. There were also two attempts by this Government to have the House of Commons deal with that issue. Those two attempts were made at times when there were different levels of detail available to Members of the Government—

Ms. Copps: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I believe the subject was discussed in some great detail. The House of Commons was asked to continue sitting to discuss Bill C-9. I am sure the Member would not want inadvertently to mislead the House.

Privilege—Mr. Clark

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Debate. The right of Hon. Secretary of State for External Affairs (Mr. Clark).

Ms. Copps: He is lying.

Mr. Clark (Yellowhead): Mr. Speaker, the Hon. Member may have been busy talking at the time and was not listening to answers from this side of the House, but the House Leader in response to that very suggestion made the point that when he moved the motion yesterday at about 5.45 p.m. he used the only language that was open to him under the rules of the House of Commons.

Mr. Marchi: Nonsense.

Mr. Clark (Yellowhead): In any event, there were two broadcasts by Global reflecting two levels of detail available to Global. There were two attempts by the Government of Canada to provide the opportunity for Parliament to deal with the eventuality of Budget information.

Ms. Copps: Government by Global.

Mr. Clark (Yellowhead): Those two attempts by the Government of Canada also reflected different levels of detail that were available at the time.

It is worth reading into the record of the House of Commons, because of the importance of this matter, the text of the news report that appeared on Global—

Mr. Lapierre: Which one?

Mr. Clark (Yellowhead): The first news report when there was a relatively light level of detail available.

Ms. Copps: Why didn't you wait for Canada A.M.?

Mr. Clark (Yellowhead): Let me quote:

On the basis of only one anonymous phone call, though Richard, we're not going to report the detail that we've got in it. We, of course, immediately checked this with the Finance Minister's office. We were told of course that there's lots of speculation at this time of year, particularly the day before a budget. He repeated that, the Finance Minister's chief spokesman, said that he wasn't going to comment any further on that, and he hoped that we would proceed very cautiously on the basis of what we had.

That was the record of what was in the public domain prior to the rising of this House yesterday. There was a suggestion that Global should proceed cautiously. Global proceeded cautiously, as it would be appropriate for them to do.

Ms. Copps: The Minister didn't recognize his own Budget.

Mr. Clark (Yellowhead): The first information available to the House Leader was the information referred to by Global Television in the excerpt that I have just read. It was not enough for us to suggest to the House of