

Privilege—Mr. Stevens

that they were tabled; first, of course, from the basic fiscal plan circulated across the nation, but most importantly, they differed from the revised budget tables circulated to individual Members and represented at that time as being the final version of the fiscal plan that the Table was receiving.

Now, Madam Speaker, the reason I suggest this is clearly a question of privilege is that it means that those who entered into the debate on budget night, those who joined in debate yesterday, including myself, and those who have taken part in this debate today, have been misled as to what in fact was the fiscal plan the Government tabled on budget night. As I indicated, I believe the Minister misled the House into feeling that he was filing something that was in conformity to his fiscal plan as amended by these revised budget tables.

Secondly, I suggest that he was in contempt of Parliament to represent that what he was filing was what in fact he intended the nation to accept as his final version of the fiscal plan.

I would suggest that he was also in breach of his oath of secrecy because tabled documents are an integral part of any budget, and how can we even today know what the Minister was attempting to deliver on Tuesday night? The fact is that we have three versions of it. Two of them must involve a breach of his oath of secrecy, because two of them are either leaks or certainly incorrect. Yet the Minister, first by his unfortunate leaking to the press, second by what he distributed in the lobbies of the House, and third by what he in fact tabled, represented three versions of what his budget entailed.

• (1520)

With all due respect, how can Members of this House properly cope when they are left in such a dilemma? Most importantly, this does not only concern what has been brought to our attention. When we checked with research houses, with those who are attempting to come up with an analysis of the budget, we found that they themselves do not know what the final version is. On two occasions I have consulted with those with whom we generally consult as to what they feel about the budget, only to be told that they are not certain what figures to feed into their computer econometric models and this type of thing in order to determine what is in fact the import of the budget.

To give Your Honour only one example of how these discrepancies are so relevant, we were told, certainly on budget night during the oral presentation of his budget speech, that the Minister intended to raise the amount in the printed version with respect to the Special Recovery Capital Projects by \$100 million this year, \$50 million next year and \$50 million the year following. If Your Honour checks with the inked version which the Minister actually tabled with respect to those figures, you will find that this year he did raise it, by the inked change, \$100 million. Next year it will be raised only \$40 million, in the ink change. In the final year it will in truth be raised \$50 million. What, in fact, is the truth? Did he intend to go up \$50 million or \$40 million?

I would suggest that in our handling of the various budgetary matters it is essential that we as Members of the House know what, in fact, is the final version of the tabling of the Minister of Finance. In short, I could take Your Honour through something like 12 different discrepancies which appear between the tabled version of what the Minister felt was final, what was distributed in the lobbies in the form of the revised budget tables, and what the Minister told us in his oral presentation. To weigh the import of 12 variations surely involves a question of privilege which affects every Hon. Member of this House when attempting to respond to the Budget.

If, as I said earlier, Your Honour finds that I have a *prima facie* case with respect to my question of privilege, I am prepared to move the motion which I indicated at the beginning. I believe that until the matter is referred to the Committee on Privileges and Elections we cannot, in a meaningful way, find out why there was such confusion on budget night. Was it a misrepresentation on the part of the Minister of Finance, deliberately done to throw off the track those who received those revised tables out in the lobbies when, in fact, he knew he was tabling something different? Do we have a Minister of Finance who has in fact broken his oath of secrecy? As I say, there are three stages involved.

Finally, I would suggest that the Committee on Privileges and Elections could perhaps determine the proper solution, to somehow or another put, in a more orderly way, what the Minister so ineptly did on Tuesday night; that is, in the presentation of his budget he did not file the proper papers, if Your Honour believes what he represented to us orally or at least through his handout in the lobbies in the form of revised budget tables.

Mr. Douglas Fisher (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Finance): Madam Speaker, I think this is a regrettable incident, and I hope that my comments now will indicate to you that the issue can be settled very quickly. Although I am sure that the Hon. Member for York-Peel (Mr. Stevens) is deeply concerned, I hope my comments now will show you that he is also wrong.

I believe that if Your Honour checks with the Clerk of the House and with his staff, you will find that a document entitled "Revised Budget Tables" and a similar version in French were submitted to him at the time the budget papers were tabled by the Minister. There was a considerable degree of confusion in the House at that time, and apparently the confusion extended, on someone's part, to these documents. Therefore, if Your Honour now goes to the Journals Branch, you will find that it has the very documents; but they were not accepted by the Clerk as tabled.

In order to clarify this confusion, this morning I rose and asked for unanimous consent to table these same documents. At that time I clarified that these documents had been submitted to the House on April 19 for tabling with the budget. These are the same documents which were intended to be tabled at that time. There was unanimous consent that I do