

Point of Order—Mr. Domm

This is hypothetical. No one knows whether the minister did or not. I now suggest, with all due respect, that there is certain information which would lead a great number of us in this House to know that it is no longer hypothetical. It disturbs me no end to feel that I have to stand up in this House, if we can prove, as Your Honour has asked us, that we can remove this matter from hypothetical circumstances to factual circumstances, and charge the minister with what was obviously a leak of confidential information prior to budget time.

I would hate to think that Your Honour is now stating that this is necessary. I would rather assume, after bringing this to a conclusion, that I would be able to pursue these phone call conversations with constituents across Canada by the minister's office, since they clearly indicated to these constituents that what was in the budget was going to save their homes. Now we have a situation where he has communicated that information, not only to constituents of mine and to others, but also to the media. If one is going to tell newspapers across Canada what is in the budget before it is actually announced, then it goes back to my original question of privilege when I said the following:

It is my understanding that a valid question of privilege is a question as to whether the law of contempt of Parliament—

Surely I do not have to rise in my place on a matter of contempt of Parliament and charge a minister. If there is contempt of Parliament, then it is up to Parliament to decide.

That is my intervention and I am pursuing the case. I hope when I come back in with a written question of privilege, which I intend to do, that I do not have to ask for the resignation of the minister responsible for housing but, rather, that I can ask the Speaker to look into the matter by referral to committee to investigate facts and not fiction. Within the next week I propose to bring facts into this House of Commons which clearly indicate that the minister has leaked confidential information, not only to the people of Canada, but to the media as well. What could be more blatantly against convention?

Madam Speaker: Of course, the hon. member is not serious when he is saying that I can allow hon. members to allege certain things against the minister, or allege a breach of budget secrecy and not make a formal charge.

There is a period during the sitting of the House, the question period, where hon. members can ask questions in order to elucidate a situation which they might want to pursue further as a question of privilege or in another fashion. However, a fishing operation cannot take place without a charge.

An hon. Member: Not even for a red herring?

Madam Speaker: An hon. member cannot stand in his place in the House and vaguely accuse another hon. member of something without substantiating it with facts. Therefore, the answer I gave the hon. member remains.

I cannot deal with a question of privilege based only on a hypothetical situation. On the other occasion the hon. member said "If the minister or an official had said such and such to

my constituency, then I would have a question of privilege." I cannot rule on hypothetical situations or statements. The hon. member must come into the House and say: "These are the statements and this is the situation." However, when all of this is prefaced by "if", the Chair is not in a position to rule.

If I do find, after the facts have been presented to me, that there is a prima facie case of privilege, then, of course, the hon. member is right. It is up to the House to find if there has been contempt of the House. That matter of contempt of the House is dealt with by the House after the Speaker has found a prima facie case.

* * *

PRIVILEGE

MR. WILSON—BUDGETARY CHANGE RESPECTING INVESTMENTS IN MURBs

Hon. Michael Wilson (Etobicoke Centre): Madam Speaker, I have a question of privilege on a related and very specific topic. It concerns the announcement made by the Minister of Finance in his place today to the effect that there will be a significant change—

Mr. Nielsen: A major change.

Mr. Wilson: —a major change in the treatment of investments in MURBs as it was first presented in the budget. This change that he announced while the stock markets were open will have a significant effect on the operations, and possibly the market value, of certain listed companies.

The reason I say it is a related point is that the whole question of budget secrecy and the timing of the release of the budget is of so much importance. The tradition and the convention is there to avoid possible financial or personal gain on the part of individuals receiving this information—

Madam Speaker: Yes, but again, that is a convention. The hon. member is rising on a question of privilege. The stock markets and companies which might be affected by a statement have no privilege in this House. Therefore, the hon. member cannot raise that matter under the heading of a question of privilege. They do not have privilege in this House. The hon. member has privilege in this House. If he tells me that his privilege has been affected by this, although I do not see how it can have been affected, I will hear him.

[*Translation*]

He did not state his question properly.

[*English*]

Mr. Wilson: My specific reason for raising it today was to give Your Honour notice as soon as I possibly could after the announcement by the minister. At this point I wish to study the transcript and also the press.

Madam Speaker: The hon. member may study the transcript and he does not have to give me notice. He can do that tomorrow. I am afraid that hon. members are taking the time