

Privilege—Mr. J. Turner

every intention of advertising their information and using it for their own commercial advantage. This flies in the face of the letter and spirit not only of financial secrecy but of commonly accepted conflict of interest post-employment principles.

This has been done flagrantly, openly, and even boastfully in full contempt of the traditions and practices of the House of Commons.

• (1510)

You, Mr. Speaker, sit in the most revered chair in Canadian democracy. You are the Speaker of the House of Commons. When Parliament became an institution as it evolved in British practice, there were two reasons for people wanting to unite. One was to approve expenditures proposed by the King and the Crown, the other was to approve or disapprove taxes imposed by the Crown.

Nothing is more fundamental to the institution of Parliament, nothing is more relevant to the privileges of Members of this House, than that we as representatives of the Canadian people have the first opportunity in a privileged way, not to be shared with anyone else, to see what the Government proposes in the way of expenditures and taxes. That privilege has been breached by the Minister.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Turner (Vancouver Quadra): I would submit that we are dealing not merely with a White Paper but with something that approximates an actual Budget presentation. It anticipates an entire overhaul of the tax system. It involves the personal affairs of every individual Canadian. It will affect the course and conduct of business in Canada for the next generation.

The special order of the House governing tomorrow's presentation clearly refers to the tabling of Notices of Ways and Means, notices of immediate tax changes. This means that we must consider this matter in the full context of a Budget presentation.

I submit to Your Honour that there is a prima facie case of privilege here. I submit that there is nothing more fundamental to the role of Parliament than the review of Ways and Means, expenditures on the one hand and proposed tax changes on the other. Enveloped as it is with all the sanctity, all the paraphernalia and all the panoply of a Budget presentation, nothing goes more to the heart of the privileges of every single Member of Parliament than this breach that I submit has been perpetrated by the Minister of Finance.

If you find that there has been a prima facie breach of the privileges of the House, I would of course be prepared to move the appropriate motion.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Nelson A. Riis (Kamloops—Shuswap): Mr. Speaker, it is an unfortunate thing that has occurred today. As the Leader of the Official Opposition (Mr. Turner) has indicated, the

White Paper that will be presented tomorrow is a very special White Paper. It is one that touches upon the lives of every Canadian. For all intents and purposes, it is being treated in the same way as a Budget. As a matter of fact, it is being treated even more importantly than have some of the Budgets we have seen in the past.

Tomorrow's lockup will last for a full eight hours, the assumed time required for Members of Parliament and others to be fully apprised of the contents of the document. The Minister of Finance (Mr. Wilson) decided that the appropriate time to make a speech outlining the high points of the changes to the tax laws of Canada would be after the stock-market closed, and that means obvious things.

As a matter of fact, when asked on a number of occasions to justify why it was necessary to present the White Paper at eight o'clock at night after the markets had closed, a satisfactory explanation was never given, other than to say that the markets in western Canada would be fully closed at that time. Obviously we are talking about changes to the income tax system of Canada that will have profound implications for all Canadians.

Today there have been people quoted in the media who presumably were participants on a panel of 20 tax lawyers and tax accountants, an elite group of tax advisers, which has now had access to the final documents regarding the tax changes. I think it is only appropriate that since this matter has been raised today this list be made public. It has been referred to by the Minister of Finance throughout today's Question Period and it is only appropriate that the people of Canada know who have been included in this assembly of experts with special information, acquired before Members of Parliament, the duly elected representatives of the people of Canada, have had an opportunity to be apprised of the contents of the tax reform statement.

In today's newspaper, a Mr. Boulanger who worked with the Finance Department from 1978 to 1982 said that he knows how those people are picked, that they are usually the guys who get their names mentioned in the paper, that it is strictly political. Another individual said that he was very flattered because his peers think he is worth talking to, peer recognition being a big thing in this business.

It has been made clear on a number of occasions the value of peer recognition when it comes to tax advice. These 20 special people will now have an obvious advantage when offering advice to corporate clients, and that is something about which we as Members of Parliament must be very concerned. We are concerned about confidentiality and about fairness when it comes to divulging this information.

It is perfectly clear that what has happened is that the Minister of Finance, through the admission of people who know the system well, has politically appointed 20 people who have received special and privileged information. Earlier the Minister of Finance was asked if he would be prepared to make changes to the documents if this so-called sounding