

the very clear statements which had been made by the Prime Minister, as recorded in yesterday's *Hansard*. I would very much hope, Mr. Speaker, that you will be prepared to rule favourably in respect of this issue.

• (1230)

Mr. Roland de Corneille (Eglinton—Lawrence): Mr. Speaker, I should like to point out that the question of privilege drew attention to the things which you outlined. However, the Hon. Member for Saint-Henri—Westmount (Mr. Johnston) also pointed out that this is a matter which also impinges upon our ability to debate what really turned out to be a budget.

There is a great distinction between what is supposed to be a White Paper and a budget. It has such an impact that the difference can mean whether or not we will be able, on behalf of our constituents, to deal with something as fundamental as taxation in a budget debate or whether we are simply looking at a White Paper and having a discussion.

Mr. Speaker: I want to assure the Hon. Member that I am listening carefully to his representations. I am also observing, with some interest, a ruling which I made.

Since I have risen, I just might remind Hon. Members, so that they need not labour the point—and perhaps the Hon. Member for Eglinton—Lawrence (Mr. de Corneille) will be assisted in this—that I am very aware of what I said in my ruling yesterday, which is this:

The Hon. Minister of Finance made the point that the White Paper was not a budget, that it is nothing more than a proposal and that it does not even represent budgetary policy. While I appreciate the distinction, I feel that the White Paper nevertheless has very important budgetary implications.

I think that pretty well sums up the substance of the complaint of the Hon. Member for Saint-Jacques. I just draw it to the attention of Hon. Members because the Chair is very aware of it.

Mr. de Corneille: Mr. Speaker, I believe it was the Hon. Member for Madawaska—Victoria (Mr. Valcourt) in Question Period today—and Your Honour can check the “blues”—who referred to it as a budget in answer to a question.

In any case, what I would like to bring to Your Honour's attention is that when the issue came up yesterday about whether or not our privileges were being violated by the 31 people having access, it was not merely a question of them being able to know, as Your Honour will recall, something ahead of time while they were under oath, it was also that they were being acquainted with facts, and this was an advantage, something apart from whether or not they were going to discuss it outside the lock-up. They were able to have advance knowledge about this budget, and this knowledge gave them a head start on their colleagues because they were given a chance ahead of time—

Privilege—Mr. Guilbault (Saint-Jacques)

Mr. Speaker: I understand very well the point which the Hon. Member for Eglinton—Lawrence is making. It was of course argued extensively the other day. As Hon. Members know, I had to consider that and brought down a ruling yesterday in which I said that, while I was not commenting at all, one way or other, about the propriety of what was done, it was not a question of privilege.

The Hon. Member for Saint-Jacques has raised a specific question of privilege, and I know the Hon. Member for Eglinton—Lawrence would want to address that specific point.

Mr. de Corneille: I quite understand that. I am not imputing anything in terms of these people saying something outside their oath. I am simply pointing out, Your Honour, that it is a case that these 31 people had more time to study it. Thus, when the deadline ended and the time was freed, they had then had access—

Mr. Speaker: I hesitate to interrupt the Hon. Member, but I have heard argument on that exact point. I have already rendered a ruling in which I have said, whether they did or whether they did not, it is not a question of privilege. As I said in that ruling, whether it was appropriate that they did or did not is another question entirely.

However, the question of privilege raised here is whether or not statements were made by the Government yesterday which were not correct and, as a consequence, have created a situation in which the privilege of Hon. Members has been breached. Of course we know that privilege has been breached if something is done in this place that diminishes the capacity of other Hon. Members to do their duty. I would ask the Hon. Member to stay right on the point.

Mr. de Corneille: Mr. Speaker, I would like simply to clarify the point I was making, that is, that Your Honour made a decision on that question of privilege yesterday based upon this information, namely, that the Prime Minister (Mr. Mulroney) had said: “it is not a Budget in the sense that it does not, per se, take effect the very same day pursuant to a Ways and Means Motion.”

I was simply trying to observe that I think that particular subject was decided upon on the basis of Your Honour being convinced that this was not a budget. Even if this in effect is acceptable to you, it indeed has all the signs of a budget, not only legally in terms of the present House of Commons but also in terms of the fact that the entire situation was covered by the media as if it were a budget; it was covered by them in a major way. This means that I will not have the opportunity as a Member of Parliament, as I ought to if it is a budget, to debate this budget with my colleagues, to hear from my constituents what are their reactions to this situation, and to try to persuade the Government to withdraw this motion. That is my position.

Mr. Speaker: I thank the Hon. Member.