

Privilege—Mr. Broadbent

people in the elaboration of the government's approach to economic policy.

As to the other matter, I am satisfied that I am not responsible for any leak, nor is any member of my department, to the individual who wrote the article in the *Toronto Star*. It was a rumour, and it was a rumour on the wrong wicket, because I did not choose tax credits but another avenue. So I do not see why an inquiry is needed at this time. As I say, it could involve all the ministers of finance. Would it be reasonable to ask me and all the provincial ministers to resign? We do not know who it was and, in fact, it was not a federal tax which was cut yesterday; it was a provincial tax. It is not my tax. I do not have any sales tax under my control.

Mr. Hnatyshyn: You have nothing to do with it, then?

Mr. Chrétien: No.

Mr. Hnatyshyn: Of course you have something to do with it.

Mr. Chrétien: I am very pleased hon. members have shown such concern about this matter because we should all be careful to guard against budget leaks and make sure that no one makes a buck out of budget preparations. Consider what has been done with regard to oil and gas, the tar sands, in terms of tertiary recovery. There was no mention of that at all.

As a result of the budget, the value of some stock went up today on the market. Now, Mr. Speaker, if the stock had gone up yesterday, perhaps the hon. member would have a case. But today, he has no case, in my judgment.

I have tried to be as candid as possible with the House. I want to say to the hon. member that I do not feel guilty of any wrongdoing. I am satisfied I have acted in the best interest of the nation and I do not have any intention of resigning, because you know how much I like being a member of parliament and a member of this government.

Mr. Walter Baker (Grenville-Carleton): Mr. Speaker, the statement made by the hon. member for Oshawa-Whitby (Mr. Broadbent) was at best speculative, but I think it was proper it should have been made yesterday because of the story which appeared, and I think it is proper that the minister should have returned to the subject today by making a statement, to which I have listened with great care.

The minister has told the House that there has been no leak, and the House is bound to accept that statement from him.

Mr. Chrétien: From our level.

Mr. Baker (Grenville-Carleton): From the level of the federal government. The minister has also told us that, if there were discussions, they were discussions at federal-provincial conference meetings between finance ministers with regard to matters of a hypothetical nature. I accept that. If that is the extent of it, and that is what the minister has told us, then I do not think this constitutes a leak in the classic sense.

It is interesting to examine the precedents for this kind of thing. The precedents cited by the hon. member for Oshawa-

[Mr. Chrétien.]

Whitby arose in a unitary state where there was no mixture of taxation authority, no sharing of authority or possibility of one level upsetting the tax proposals of another. In that context the possibility of discussion even in a hypothetical way takes on a completely different sense. As we move ahead and rationalize relationships between the provinces and the federal government, in order to bring the provinces into the federal picture in a way which has been denied them during the last ten years there must be increasing use made of this kind of hypothetical discussion, otherwise the two levels of government would find themselves working, as it were, in a vacuum.

The minister has told us he is open to consider some changes in our procedure. I would be the last to argue that parliament should involve itself in the budget-making process as such. That is an executive function. Nevertheless, the executive functions leading up to the budget are not an exclusive jurisdiction enjoyed by members on the treasury benches opposite and, in my judgment, this parliament has a long way to go before a satisfactory mechanism for dealing with this question is found. The minister's predecessor made some suggestions for procedural improvement, and I recall that the hon. member for Eglinton (Mr. Sharp), when he was House leader, also made certain proposals. None of them have been acted upon, though.

If the minister is, indeed, serious, we must pay more than lip service to the idea that before the finalization of the budget by the executive branch, parliament should be allowed an opportunity to make its contribution based on specific proposals. What ought it to be based on? First, it ought to be based on the documents governments prepare to advise themselves with respect to options. Second, it ought to be based on pre-budget submissions which are made by manufacturers' associations, labour unions, and trade associations and others. Those submissions ought not to be made only to the government; they ought to be tabled in the House of Commons in the ordinary way so that they are part of the process.

• (1532)

Certain changes must be made with respect to the budget-making process. It has to be more open not only in the executive function but also in those parts leading up to that function, because what happens in terms of budgets is that the government takes a position in parliament, but that position is not tempered in any way by any prior intervention by members of parliament who, as representatives, are just as concerned about the form of budgets as are others.

As I said at the outset, there may be differing views, and I respect them, but I listened carefully to what the minister said, and as a member of parliament he undertook that there had not been a leak.

The minister stated that he had not told anyone in advance what was going to be in the budget which he presented to the House last night. He said he had hypothesized about things which might have been in it. If that is the case, I think members of this House must accept the representation of the minister. There may be some questions about his wisdom in