

*Privilege—Mr. Guilbault (Saint-Jacques)*

this procedure, if we accept that a Government might present a real Budget and say simply that it is a white paper.

I, for one, Mr. Speaker, find this procedure totally unacceptable, and I should like to add the comment that if you should concede here that we do have a Budget, then we have the right, and I emphasize this point, we have the right to debate this Budget for six days here in the House.

• (1220)

[English]

**Mr. Steven W. Langdon (Essex—Windsor):** Mr. Speaker, the question that has been raised is extremely serious. As to whether it does constitute a serious question of privilege, there are three points that need to be stressed. The first point, of course, is that the Prime Minister (Mr. Mulroney), in yesterday's Question Period, said with respect to last night's presentation that it "sets forth the general thrust of government thinking". He also said that "it does not, per se, take effect the very same day pursuant to a Ways and Means Motion". The words uttered were very clear and specific. Despite that, it is quite clear that very specific Ways and Means motions were in fact put before the House, some to take effect starting yesterday and others to take effect if the legislation is passed.

I think that, in itself, is a very clear indication that what we had was at least a falsehood stated by the Prime Minister yesterday. I think also it demonstrates to us that what was presented to the House was something quite different from what had been suggested to us, as a Chamber, by way of an excuse in respect of whether or not this was a group of 31 individuals or otherwise that had the chance to have that privileged access, and to justify that before the House.

There are two further points, Mr. Speaker, that have to be kept very much in mind in assessing this suggested question of privilege. The first is that with the package handed down last night came an "Economic and Fiscal Outlook". An economic and fiscal outlook document traditionally forms a part of a budget package. I have found that to be the case with every budget I have examined, both as an economic historian and as a Member of Parliament. It is not something that is part of a statement of general philosophy, as the Prime Minister has suggested this was. That is an important ingredient in the package that needs to be examined.

For me, Mr. Speaker, the thing which is most crucial, the fact which, frankly, bites most strongly at the integrity of this Government, is that the Ways and Means motions which took effect yesterday had a profound and direct effect on the economy of this country. There were certain tax changes which came into effect, certain changes which affected some sectors and which didn't affect others. And despite that reality, there were certain private individuals, individuals who were not part of the government bureaucracy of this country, individuals who were not part of the lock-up procedure, who were given the chance to have access to that information—information

about tax changes and about changes which had to do with how different sectors would be treated—before that information was given either to the House or to the public.

**Mr. Lewis:** That was dealt with yesterday. You should have been here yesterday.

**Mr. Langdon:** The fact that such a step was taken is totally unprecedented, totally unacceptable. It is the type of thing that has led, as far as I have seen, to resignation. If a Minister of Finance gets into a position whereby he has let that kind of information out—

**Mr. Lewis:** Name one.

**Mr. Langdon:** That has happened in Great Britain, where only a single reporter saw the Budget documentation in advance. We have here a situation where a significant number of individuals across this country had information which no one else in this country had, private individuals, and as a result of having that information they had the chance to make adjustments in their portfolios of stocks and shares—

**Mr. Speaker:** Order, please. The Hon. Member for Essex—Windsor (Mr. Langdon) has been addressing the point of privilege raised by the Hon. Member for Saint-Jacques (Mr. Guilbault), and I am indebted to the Hon. Member for his contribution. However, for the last minute or two, the Hon. Member has been dealing with another matter. While that other matter has obviously attracted the attention of many Members of the Chamber and is in itself important, it is not the matter that the Hon. Member for Saint-Jacques has raised.

The point of the question of privilege now raised relates to whether statements made by representatives of the Government in this Chamber were misleading; and if they were, did that impinge on the privileges of Hon. Members. That is the issue.

As to the question of some people outside of this place, albeit under oath, having information which other Canadians and Hon. Members did not have, I have of course already ruled.

The Hon. Member may have something to add, though I think I do have the gist of his remarks now. If he wishes to add something in closing, I shall be more than pleased to hear him.

**Mr. Langdon:** Just very briefly, Mr. Speaker. I was, of course, aware of your earlier ruling. What I suggested that made a difference is that we are now in a position where we can see that, contrary to statements which were made in the House yesterday, this clearly was a document which brought forth immediate Ways and Means motions which came into effect right away and which also will come into effect through legislation over a longer period of time.

The final point that I make, Mr. Speaker, is simply that this issue is, I think, a very serious question of privilege because of