

The Deputy Prime Minister talked about the fact, in one of his speeches this morning, that the House had to be recalled in order for the Budget to be before the House. A little while later in his speech he talked about the Budget, which he described as already being before the House. Well, the order that was passed is such that we can only deal with the Budget at 5 o'clock this afternoon.

So which is it? Was the Budget before the House when the Deputy Prime Minister was making his statement this morning, or was it not before the House? He has, in fact, said both.

My submission is that the order that was passed calls for two things: one, for this Budget to be brought before the House at 5 o'clock today, and secondly, that it would be brought before this House on or before the time that it would be given to anyone else in the country. Given that the Government has breached that part of the agreement, I do not feel that the unanimous consent we gave for the Budget to be presented at five o'clock today still holds, because it was a conditional consent, an inherent one albeit but nevertheless one which I believe holds, that that Budget was to be presented to us before anyone else. That was breached twice. Once, by the leak caused by the negligence of some type or another, and secondly by the Minister's own speech and the Minister's deliberate handing out of those budgetary documents, which was done across the street last night shortly after 10 o'clock. I went to pick up one of those documents myself. Initially, the official refused to give me a copy of the Budget, saying that I was not a member of the Press Gallery.

• (1610)

Some Hon. Members: Shame.

Mr. Boudria: I stated to the official: "You are telling me, sir, that I cannot have a copy of the Budget? As a Member of Parliament, I cannot have a government document?" I also said: "That is going to make an interesting point of privilege tomorrow". Of course, I was given one immediately, as one might expect.

I submit to you, Mr. Speaker, that across the street yesterday, initially even Members of Parliament were denied the privilege of getting a budgetary document. In other words, the press had access to the Budget not at

the same time as MPs, but before, and deliberately by an action of the Government.

I believe that I have indicated to you, Mr. Speaker, a number of cases which should convince you that I have indeed a prima facie case of parliamentary privilege.

Right Hon. Joe Clark (Secretary of State for External Affairs): Mr. Speaker, it has been some time since I have been involved in procedural questions, but there are a couple of matters I wish to raise. As the Hon. Member for Glengarry—Prescott—Russell (Mr. Boudria) drew to the attention of the House, I am not a lawyer, but I have had the benefit of some instruction from my wife on some of the intricacies of the law.

Ms. Coppins: You tried to be a lawyer.

Mr. Clark (Yellowhead): I hope that my school friend, and his quiet seat-mate, will allow for that.

There are a couple of narrow questions that have to be judged by yourself, Mr. Speaker. They are narrow questions about the propriety of the conduct of the Government in quite extraordinary circumstances.

It is important to take a look at the precedents with regard to the activity of a Minister of Finance when information relating to a Budget comes into the public domain. Those precedents are very precise. Whenever there has been a suggestion that a Minister of Finance must resign, that has been because the information relating to the Budget was published by that Minister; it came from the Minister. That was the case. Some Members of the House are shaking their heads. If they have other information, they can bring it forward in this debate.

However, that was clearly the case in the situation of Hugh Dalton who made an incautious remark himself to a journalist on the way into the Mother of Parliaments in Westminster. That was clearly the case in the situation of the Hon. Marc Lalonde who was careless with a zoom lens at least once in his life and had to rewrite his Budget as a consequence. That was the case in all those circumstances in which a suggestion has seriously been made that a Minister of Finance must relinquish his position as Minister because information became available. That did not happen here. That is not the circumstance in this case.

Questions of where ministerial responsibility begins and ends are very serious questions. As the House Leader of the Official Opposition indicated today during his intervention in this point of privilege, there has been a decision by the Federal Court of Canada with respect to that question. It is a decision with which I am rather acutely acquainted, because it had to do with myself and