

Privilege

Mr. Lewis: This Government is ready to be judged on how we acted.

Mr. Kaplan: Let's have an election.

Mr. Epp: You don't have a leader.

Mr. Lewis: Mr. Speaker, I submit there is no point of privilege. I thank you for the opportunity to make these remarks.

Hon. Herb Gray (Windsor West): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Finance (Mr. Wilson) has the kind of look on his face which indicates to me he must be saying to himself after hearing the speech of the Minister of Justice that he thinks he should get himself another lawyer.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Gray (Windsor West): It has been a long time since this House and the Canadian people have heard such an inept and unconvincing attempt to defend the indefensible.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Gray (Windsor West): The Minister of Justice (Mr. Lewis) said we have every right to use the rules, but we have no right to abuse the rules. This point did not seem to concern the Minister of Justice when last June and last December he and the government Members butchered the rules in an attempt to get their way with this House.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Gray (Windsor West): The Minister of Justice obviously failed to carry out his first responsibility to his Government and to this House when he failed to even approach the Speaker and ask the Speaker if he would be willing to apply Standing Order 28(3).

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Gray (Windsor West): The Minister of Justice confirmed that when the House adjourned yesterday, the Speaker said that the House stands adjourned, which clearly is the foundation for the application of Standing Order 28(3) which reads:

Whenever the House stands adjourned, if the Speaker is satisfied after consultation with the Government, that the public interest requires that the House should meet at an earlier time, the Speaker may give notice that being so satisfied the House shall meet, and thereupon the House shall meet to transact its business as if it had been duly adjourned to that time.

The Hon. Minister of Justice speaks of parliamentary tradition. Surely the basis for that tradition is to at least

approach the Speaker when the rules of this House give some reasonable basis to do so, to ask the Speaker to use the authority this House has given him in the Standing Orders. If the Minister of Justice did not do so, then he has no business trying to blame the opposition Parties for his incompetence and that of his colleagues.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Gray (Windsor West): It is clear, Mr. Speaker, that the co-operation of the opposition Parties was not required to have the House sit last night if that is what the Government thought it was in the public interest to do. All that had to be done was to approach you, Sir, and ask that the Standing Order be applied. But, it is clear the Government was more interested in scrambling around trying to hide its own problems, trying to find some way out, than relying on the parliamentary tradition that the Minister of Justice is crying about right now.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Gray (Windsor West): The Minister of Finance (Mr. Wilson) in his own equally unconvincing statement earlier today, said that he was in the clear because, as far as he could determine, there was no negligence on the part of his officials, and that there was some type of deliberate effort to have the information in the Budget in the hands of the public before it was done properly pursuant to the rules and traditions of this House.

The Minister of Finance has given no facts, no evidence, no basis on which this House or the Canadian people can accept that this statement is correct, and that there has been a sufficient examination of what went on to reach that conclusion. In any event the Minister must take responsibility for the actions or inactions of his officials. This was clearly established in a recent court case in the Federal Court of Appeal where it was determined that the former Member for Kingston and the present Secretary of State for External Affairs (Mr. Clark) had to take responsibility for the actions of their officials even though they were not personally informed.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Gray (Windsor West): If the Minister of Finance was so concerned about doing things in the right way, then he should have come in to the House, accepted his responsibility, resigned and said that he was withdrawing this Budget.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!