

Privilege—Mr. Milliken

In this particular period, \$6.2 billion has been raised and \$1 billion has been borrowed without asking the consent of this Parliament. I think that after examining this, you will find that we indeed have a *prima facie* case of privilege.

Mr. Speaker: I will hear the Hon. Member for Kamloops (Mr. Riis) in a moment, but before moving on to the Hon. Member for Kamloops, I wonder if I could ask the Hon. Member for Glengarry—Prescott—Russell (Mr. Boudria) or the Hon. Member for Kingston and the Islands (Mr. Milliken) if, in the extensive research which they have obviously done, they have been able to determine when historically the first Throne Speech appears.

Second, can they advise the Chair as to whether that Throne Speech was prepared by the Commons or prepared the King's Council. It may take a little while to find that information, but I would like to have it.

Mr. Nelson A. Riis (Kamloops): Mr. Speaker, I suppose I am pleased to participate in this debate on this important matter, though, as others have indicated, I would prefer not to even have this discussion.

I think what has been raised today is obviously fundamental to what we do here. This is one of those rare occasions when general members of the public bring to one's attention what they believe is an impropriety of the way Parliament is conducting its business. I must say that while we were awaiting the recall of Parliament, a number of constituents brought to my attention the fact that the Government was in fact using Governor General warrants. They did not refer to it as that, but through the short news reports they read, they were wondering if this was an appropriate way for Parliament to proceed.

As previous speakers have indicated, and I do not plan to go over the material which they presented extremely well, the fact is that the Government has now obtained in excess of \$6 billion though the use of Governor General warrants when in fact Parliament could have been sitting and should have been sitting. As a matter of fact, you will be aware, Mr. Speaker, that a number of Members actually called to your attention the need, in their opinion, for the House to resume.

We as parliamentarians all understand that the fundamental task before us is to examine carefully the way the Government uses, or in some cases, some of us would believe misuses, the taxpayers' money. That is our fundamental task. That is why we have been elected from our various constituencies.

At this time, it is appropriate that we examine carefully and either grant or withhold supply. Most of us look forward to that process. As a matter of fact, the House Leaders met to arrange at least for the remaining part of this session ways and means of dealing with supply to get around some of the problems we face because of the summer interruption. We take our jobs very seriously in this respect.

As the others have indicated, we have seen the Government spending public money without the authority of Parliament when there is no reason for it. We understand that in the past, Governor General warrants have been used, but there has been a point with one exception, and that was, of course, when the House was simply unable to be called and to have called the House would perhaps have been inappropriate, but such was not the case during this interval.

I think this is a very serious issue, serious enough that one's constituents bring it to one's attention. I only regret that I had not raised this earlier, but I am pleased that my colleagues in the Official Opposition have done so.

Consider that in this century, this action has been taken only 10 times. I think we must ask ourselves as Members of Parliament, if this procedure, this process, is not concluded, and the Government feels it quite appropriate to simply not have Parliament sit and to use Governor General warrants to obtain the necessary funds to enable it to fulfil its obligations as it sees them, parliamentarians would not be in a position to examine carefully the items of supply before the various Standing Committees.

I simply conclude by saying that I join with my colleagues from the Official Opposition. I believe it is a very serious violation of the privileges of every Member and a violation of the tradition of Parliament as we have come to know it in Canada. I join with them in asking you to give this very serious consideration, which I know you will. Quite frankly, I look forward to listening to the Government House Leader explain why he feels it is appropriate that once again, and I hate to have to say it, the Government is abusing the traditions of Parliament and the privileges of Members of Parliament.