

Statement by Finance Minister

Now, the present minister is doing just that. He announces it, then he proceeds to do it, in two stages. A tax increase being a painful operation, it should be sufficient to announce it once, when it becomes effective. It seems that the minister is indulging in masochism and tries to harm himself by first announcing an increase in taxes and then increasing them.

If the minister deemed it advisable to announce the tax increase in two stages, instead of one, it is that he recognizes the situation as serious. Mr. Speaker, as all businessman in Canada will see it immediately he wants to reassure the creditors of the present government that funds will increase, thanks to new taxes. The Minister of Finance is besieged by creditors, but he cannot pay. So, he says: We will raise taxes, and to indicate his intentions, he announced those tax increases today in order to reassure the government's creditors.

This matter has become urgent, to the point that it should, undoubtedly, be debated no later than today.

Mr. Speaker: I should like to remind the hon. members that this discussion has now lasted nearly an hour. I now recognize the hon. member for Northumberland.

[English]

Hon. George Hees (Northumberland): Mr. Speaker, there are two reasons why this matter must be debated today, and both have to do with the financial stability of this country. The fact that the Minister of Finance has announced on the spur of the moment that he must raise taxes has greatly alarmed those people who are active in the financial affairs of the country. In my view the fact that he is not going to explain in the near future why he intends to bring in these measures will cause irreparable damage. He must seize the opportunity to do so today, take the country into his confidence, and explain to us why he must introduce these measures and what are the circumstances forcing him to do so.

The second reason for debating this matter today is, as the minister stated, that he first intends to discuss these matters with the provinces. He will discuss with them what taxes he intends to impose. We all know that when a federal-provincial conference is held in Ottawa there are immediate and simultaneous leaks. It has been the case previously that as soon as those discussing these

matters have left the meeting room, information has been leaked to the press and these leaks have received widespread publicity.

This method of dealing with a matter of this urgency is not good enough. For these two reasons, and for the many others that were mentioned today, a debate on this subject must take place right now in the interests of this country.

Mr. Bert Leboe (Cariboo): Mr. Speaker, I will only speak for a moment. I would like to call the attention of the house to citation 100 (2). This is in answer to the plea made by the Solicitor General. The citation reads as follows:

The "definite matter of urgent public importance", for the discussion of which the adjournment of the House may be moved under Standing Order 26, must be so pressing that public interest will suffer if it is not given immediate attention.

Paragraph 3 of the same citation reads:

"Urgency" within this rule does not apply to the matter itself, but it means "urgency of debate", when the ordinary opportunities provided by the rules of the House do not permit the subject to be brought on early enough and public interest demands that discussion take place immediately.

The only decision you have to make, Mr. Speaker, is whether or not the public is going to suffer.

Mr. Speaker: I thank hon. members for their helpful contributions. I believe I must express the thought, which I stated a moment ago, that the discussion we have had centred on whether we should have a debate, and hon. members were to advise the Chair. I have the feeling that many of the contributions, perhaps rightly so in view of the importance of the matter, dealt not only with the strict procedural point before the house but also with the substance of the matter. I feel that a number of hon. members who took part in the debate did have an opportunity to express their views about the substance of the situation before us.

Hon. members know that under standing order 26 adjournment motions should not be accepted except in very extreme circumstances. Some hon. members might consider that this is the type of circumstance which would require such a motion to be granted, but I have my doubts about it. Our parliamentary system is based on the premise that the business of the house is dictated from day to day by the government. It is the government's responsibility to bring down