

Privilege

I want to deal with the Minister's argument that it is all the Opposition's fault that we are here this morning.

Standing Order 28(3) gives the authority to the Speaker to call the House of Commons back from adjournment if the Speaker is satisfied after consultation with the Government, that this is in the public interest.

Mr. Clark (Yellowhead): Blame the Speaker.

Mr. Crosbie (St. John's West): Blame the Speaker.

Mr. Clark (Yellowhead): You are shameful.

Mr. Turner (Vancouver Quadra): If, Your Honour, you feel, after being petitioned by a Minister of the Crown, particularly the Government House Leader, that it is in the public interest that Parliament be recalled, you can recall it and you have recalled it on other occasions.

Had the Speaker called the House last night, the Opposition would not have been able to prevent the Minister of Finance from at least presenting the House with his taxation proposals.

Standing Order 83(1) explicitly gives any Minister of the Crown the right to table a notice of Ways and Means motion at any time during the sitting. The Minister could have come in here, Your Honour could have called the House back at the House Leader's urging, surely it was an emergency situation. Then the Minister of Finance could have stood up in this House and presented his Ways and Means motion and spoken to it.

Mr. Clark (Yellowhead): Blame the Speaker.

Mr. Turner (Vancouver Quadra): Having failed to resign, the Minister of Finance followed his own incorrect course of action. He followed that course of action and acted improperly.

The Prime Minister and the Minister of Finance are unwilling or unable to seize and to understand that this is a classic, indeed the classic failure, of ministerial responsibility in a parliamentary democracy.

Ministerial responsibility is not just another anachronism, left over from another time, that the Minister of Finance can discard.

Mr. Clark (Yellowhead): Speaking of anachronisms.

Mr. Turner (Vancouver Quadra): It is another fundamental facet, another fundamental principle of parliamentary democracy.

For the House of Commons to perform its functions, for our way of government to work in a fair manner, the Minister has no choice but to accept full responsibility for this, the largest violation of budgetary secrecy in the history of the Parliament of Canada.

I heard the Prime Minister on the radio saying: "Well, if a shop gets robbed you do not punish the shopkeeper, I mean it is the thief's fault". My reply was, "It depends on whether or not the door was locked", and in this case the door was not locked.

The Minister of Finance has been unable to control his Department.

Mr. Clark (Yellowhead): What do you know that we don't, John?

Mr. Turner (Vancouver Quadra): He has been unable to meet his fiscal goals as a direct result of his own monetary policy.

Mr. Clark (Yellowhead): Who sent the thief?

Mr. Axworthy (Winnipeg South Centre): You sent it. You said it.

Mr. Clark (Yellowhead): Who sent the thief?

Mr. Turner (Vancouver Quadra): He has been unfair with Canadians in his taxation policy, and now he is unable to deal fairly with the presentation of his policy.

We accuse this Minister of deception in the House of Commons because he did not tell the people the facts last autumn. We accuse this Minister of deception because they said there were spending commitments which have been violated in this document. We accuse the Minister of mismanagement for having doubled the public debt of this country in four short years. Now we accuse him of breach of trust for failing to resign.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Clark (Yellowhead): Chrétien, Chrétien, Chrétien.

Mr. Turner (Vancouver Quadra): Mr. Speaker, the unanswered questions are legion. When did the Minister of Finance personally find out about the unprecedented release, the budget leak? What did the Minister of Finance do when he did find out?

An Hon. Member: He did not come here.

Mr. Turner (Vancouver Quadra): Why didn't he resign immediately? Why, at least, did he not come onto the floor of the House and urge you, as the Speaker, to reconvene the House through his Government House Leader?