

Canadians volunteer information by filling out income tax forms and providing census data—which they must under law—file with Canada Manpower or engage in any of the myriad interactions with government agencies which take place on a daily basis? I think not. I gave you evidence this morning of why not.

Ministers must limit themselves to the terms and conditions of Citation 379 of *Beauchesne's Fifth Edition* when tabling documents in the House, and I feel it is important for this point of order that the record shows what those restrictions are. Citation 379(1) entitled "Production of Papers" reads:

- (1) Papers are laid before the House in pursuance of:
 - (a) provisions of an Act of Parliament;
 - (b) an Order of the House;
 - (c) an Address to the Crown; or
 - (d) Standing Orders of the House.
- (2) Papers may be laid before the House voluntarily under S.O. 41(2).

Otherwise, Mr. Speaker, let them step outside this House. Let the Minister of Finance and others step outside this House if they want to make government information public. Let them stop hiding behind the privileges of this House and take the full legal consequences of their actions if they want to violate the rights and freedoms of Canadians. I believe that the practices of this House require the Minister to seek the unanimous consent of the House if he wants to table the correspondence which passed between his Department and the Leader of the Opposition. He did not do so. Nowhere in the records of this House is such consent recorded, nor is any order for the production of the papers contained in the *Votes and Proceedings*. The only official record of the correspondence is found in Friday's *Votes and Proceedings* where they are noted as having been tabled by the Minister and as having become Sessional Paper 322-7/2.

● (1520)

As I said to you in my introductory remarks, Mr. Speaker, this whole issue bothers me deeply. Today I had another conversation with one of a group of people representing a registered charity who are working on a specific piece of legislation that has had first reading in the House. I had a phone call from a gentleman who asked me what he was to make of the bulletin received at the end of last week from Revenue Canada which inferred that lobbying on controversial legislation could jeopardize their status as a registered charity.

Where does this end, Mr. Speaker? That is a serious question that the House has to address. Should we simply write it off as politics and say that this happens in politics, or that politics is dirty? I do not subscribe to that theory, nor will I ever. If we allow ourselves to be dragged down to those levels, then what happens to the institution of parliamentary democracy? What happens to the cynicism in the country toward the institution of Parliament?

In closing, Mr. Speaker, the strength of our institutions is the unspoken contract between the individual and the body politic. As Denis Diderot said:

Point of Order—Mr. Epp

There is no moral precept that does not have something inconvenient about it. In the practice of morality as in other activities, it takes exercise to build strength.

It was Horace Mann who said:

He who never sacrificed a present to a future good, or a personal to a general one, can speak of happiness only as the blind do of colours.

What we are dealing with today is at the very heart of the parliamentary process. The Minister of Finance violated the practices of this House last Tuesday. I ask that you consider the matter and take whatever steps are necessary to make sure that this incident does not become a precedent for further violations by the Government.

Hon. Marc Lalonde (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, I have listened with great care and attention to what the Hon. Member for Provencher (Mr. Epp) has just said. Frankly, I find very little to argue with in it. I think his point was well put and well documented on the principle of it and also on the practice of it.

I think it is important to make some distinctions, however. For instance, he referred to Revenue Canada documents in that regard. I am sure my hon. friend knows that the law is quite categorical and specific in terms of Revenue Canada. Sanctions are imposed by law on officials and everybody concerning the confidentiality of income tax reports and the relationship between individual citizens and the Department of National Revenue. In bringing this particular aspect of the matter into debate I would say that the Hon. Member was going overboard. The law of Revenue Canada is quite specific and categorical in this regard.

There then arises the general issue of communications between citizens and the Government. Obviously there is room for more argument. The Hon. Member raises an important point. As he knows, I have opened up considerably the whole process of budget-making in terms of consultation—

Mr. Nielsen: Two hundred million dollars worth.

Mr. Lalonde:—some say even too much—receiving briefs, and hearing individuals and groups. In that process there are frequent exchanges between groups, and in consulting particular groups one is unavoidably able to find out what they think. This is a process of evolving something that will eventually be the Budget. It is not yet Government policy or a decision. If you want broad consultation it is unavoidable that you cannot treat it as you do an income tax report because it is a different issue. Hundreds of people come in with hundreds of ideas about what the Government should or should not do, including some from the floor of this House.

If we want to examine the situation in the context of budgetary consultations generally, I can understand individuals who would say: "This is important in terms of the privileged information of my corporation; this is confidential information that, if released, could hurt my competitive situation". One can imagine a number of instances like that.

But I would say that in 99.9 per cent of the cases, the representations we receive are general representations by