

Privilege—Mr. J. Turner

of these 20 people. I would like to exclude that from the debate entirely.

I ask the Hon. Member for Papineau to close the debate as I believe the Chair has heard most of the points, although I think the Hon. Member for Papineau may have one very key point which I should hear.

[*Translation*]

Hon. André Ouellet (Papineau): Mr. Speaker, naturally, I quite appreciate your latest intervention following the comments made by the Conservative Member. Basically, both this Member and the Minister of Communications (Miss MacDonald), in coming to the defense of the Minister of Finance (Mr. Wilson), are trying to lead the discussion to a very different subject matter than that raised by the Leader of the Opposition. The subject of our concern is not the group of twenty friends of the Minister of Finance, but the Minister of Finance himself, and I submit that the Minister has abused my rights and privileges as a Member of Parliament, as well as the privileges of all the Members of this House, both in the Opposition and in the Government.

As Members of Parliament, we must wait until tomorrow evening to hear the Minister announce his decisions. Some of us will have to spend part of the day locked up in a room to receive information on the document which will be made public tomorrow evening by the Minister of Finance.

We have now learned that twenty friends of the Minister of Finance will be able today to learn that we shall hear only tomorrow, without knowing who these twenty friends are. My colleague for Laval-des-Rapides (Mr. Garneau) has asked the Minister of Finance to publish the names of these twenty privileged people. The Minister of Finance did not have the courage to give us these names.

Second, we do not know where these twenty pals will go this evening. Where will they sleep? What will they do when the lock-up is imposed on those who, tomorrow—

[*English*]

Mr. Speaker: The Hon. Member for Papineau is repeating an argument which was heard earlier. These 20 persons are not on a jury. They have taken an oath covering the period of time during which they have been in a particular relationship with the Department. Once the oath is taken it is not the practice to follow the people around or keep them enclosed in a special room or building.

Mr. Gauthier: They do it to us. They do it to the press.

Mr. Speaker: The lock-up is, of course, something else. No oath is taken in that situation.

I know the Hon. Member from Papineau wants to assist the Chair. Perhaps he could put aside that argument and get back to the question of privilege which he is addressing very effectively.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Ouellet: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate naturally that the twenty pals of the Minister of Finance are sworn to secrecy. In fact, all our argumentation on the violation of parliamentary privilege is based on the fact that the Minister of Finance will disclose to an elite group information which will be given to the public only tomorrow evening, and to a few Members of Parliament and media representatives only tomorrow afternoon, and on the fact that these Members of Parliament and reporters will be confined to a room where they will have to wait until the last minute, right up to the time when the Minister is ready to make his statement, to discuss the contents of the White Paper.

We have never questioned the need for consultation. Yet, the Minister of Communications, who is trying to help her colleague, the Minister of Finance, and who has a long experience in this House and is well aware of our Standing Orders and parliamentary traditions, is attempting to invent an argument to get the Minister of Finance out of this mess. Speaking about consultations is perhaps a way to shield the Minister of Finance, but the fact is that we have nothing against the consultation process. We have never opposed the fact that the Minister of Finance might want to have consultations. What we are object to is that, on this very day, as we are objecting in this House to the attitude of the Minister of Finance, twenty pals of the Minister already know what the Minister will say tomorrow evening.

Mr. Speaker, in our opinion, this constitutes a serious abuse of the privileges of this House of Commons.

• (1700)

[*English*]

Mr. Speaker: I think there is a discretion on the part of the Chair to say that after a very lengthy discussion on an important matter I would ask Hon. Members to bear with the Chair and close off the debate. I want to thank all Hon. Members for their interventions. I think that the answers that some Hon. Members have been able to give to some of my specific queries will be of help to the Chair. I shall try to return to the Chamber as quickly as possible and see if my comments will be of assistance to Hon. Members.

Mr. Waddell: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I know that you want to end the debate, but I want to add one point that might help with your deliberations. There was a precedent concerning this kind of outside adviser. I believe it was when Walter Gordon—

Mr. Speaker: I appreciate the Hon. Member's contribution, but that point was made. It was in 1963 and the point has been referred to in argument by the Hon. Member for Regina East (Mr. de Jong), I believe, and the Right Hon. Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Turner) in his earlier address.

Some of us were not in this place but, nonetheless, we can well remember exactly what happened at that time. I thank