

● (1420)

I say to you Madam Speaker, that what we have had here today is a blatant ignoring of the kind of tradition in which we have been schooled for generations, in fact, for hundreds of years as the British parliamentary tradition has evolved over the centuries. It is one which I think will not only bring shame on the minister, but unfortunately could serve to shame the whole institution of which we want so justifiably to be proud.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Ian Waddell (Vancouver-Kingsway): Madam Speaker, I am tempted to wonder what the previous member for Prince Albert would say about this procedure if he were in the House today.

I want to be very brief on this point of privilege. I am concerned, as is the hon. member for Broadview-Greenwood (Mr. Rae), with the fact that the government is once again trying to sneak in budgetary measures quickly, without adequate warning, notice and proper debate. I am particularly concerned because I had a chance to see the minister very briefly today. As my party's energy critic, I would have appreciated knowing that this motion was coming and would have appreciated getting some notice of his press release. Perhaps then the attitude on this side of the House might have been quite different.

This is not only a financial matter but it does, of course, concern energy. The delicate nature of the energy negotiations and constitutional negotiations in this country has been brought up by many members. I would remind the minister through you, Madam Speaker, that I represent a constituency in a province where the cabinet of that province is meeting with the cabinet of the province of Alberta. I know this is not the time to state my views on that, but I would say to the minister that these are ominous times, and this is a forewarning of some very difficult things that we are all going to have to deal with out in western Canada. I say that very seriously to the minister.

That is why on energy matters, the minister has got to be very careful that he gives the House the widest opportunity for debate and adopts the fairest procedure. Otherwise it will be perceived not just in this House or by members defending these thousand years of traditions of Parliament, but will also affect the very contemporary, difficult problems that we have in the west in dealing with what are almost separatist tendencies. I would ask the minister to remember this in his future actions.

Mr. Malone: We just want to separate from Lalonde.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

[*Translation*]

Madam Speaker: I am ready to make a ruling on that question of privilege, but if the hon. member for Wellington-Dufferin-Simcoe (Mr. Beatty) insists, I could hear him, because he was one of those who rose before I began my statement. Does the hon. member insist?

Privilege—Mr. Clark

[*English*]

Hon. Perrin Beatty (Wellington-Dufferin-Simcoe): I appreciate your courtesy, Madam Speaker, and I will attempt to be brief.

I think it will be useful before you make your ruling for us to go back for a moment and remind ourselves of what it was the hon. Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Clark) said at the time he rose. He asked not that the minister be compelled by the House or that he be compelled by you to give any explanation of what he was doing, but he asked as a matter of courtesy that there be unanimous consent in the House to allow a minister to make a brief statement simply to explain this measure that he was putting before Parliament.

As so many members have pointed out, no one in this Parliament, certainly no one on this side of the House, was given any advance warning of this very major announcement which the minister was making today of a half-a-billion dollar increase in taxation which will affect the lives of every Canadian.

Common courtesy and tradition in this House dictate that when ministers are making statements of a major policy nature they have the responsibility to indicate to members of the opposition, to the official critics in the opposition, what their intention is in making those announcements so that we do not get major announcements sprung on us without any warning. There is nothing in the rules which requires that, Madam Speaker. No one on this side of the House has insisted that the rules did require it, but parliamentary convention and common courtesy demand that this be done.

There are rules in this House, both written and unwritten, which are important to each of us. I think it is essential that the government go beyond the strict interpretation of the rule book and that it acts with the sort of courtesy that it expected at this time last year when the government was then the opposition. At that time our prime minister, the current Leader of the Opposition, insisted that every minister in his government should extend that courtesy toward the House of Commons.

In Canada today we are talking about constitutional renewal to make the constitution work. We are talking in this House from time to time about the need for parliamentary reform to make Parliament work; in other words, what can we do to change the rules to make it function more effectively. If the truth were told, no change in the constitution and no change in the rules of Parliament would guarantee that Parliament was functional again or that federalism was functional again. What is necessary is that there be a change in attitude on the part of the leadership of this country.

Confederation could be made to work today if the government opposite were prepared to want to make it work. Parliament without a single change in the rules could be made to work today if there were a disposition on the other side of the House to share with Parliament the governance of this country.