

Privilege—Mr. W. Baker

the procedures that have been established for a budgetary matter in this House. That is why I described what happened last evening as an attempt to sneak a budget matter into the throne speech debate without the usual protection and privileges given to members of Parliament and, indeed, to the public with respect to budgetary presentation.

I want to make it clear at the outset that I have studied the applicable precedents. I know that ways and means motions have been introduced without a budget presentation. That is a practice that has been accepted in the past, even though objections have been raised. I know that economic statements have been brought into debate at the resolution stage or at Committee of the Whole stage on income tax measures. We all remember the statement made to the House on October 20, 1977, during the throne speech by the present Minister of Justice (Mr. Chrétien) when he was minister of finance.

I contend, Madam Speaker, that the minister has leaped beyond all of these precedents and has presented a mini-budget to this House while denying to members of Parliament their right to debate and to amend a motion of approval which he would be putting to this House. That is the fundamental difference between the practice that we saw yesterday and what has occurred in the past. No doubt, Madam Speaker, you will have the occasion to examine Beauchesne, but if I could refer you to Beauchesne's fifth edition, citation 515, we find the following statement:

There is no necessity to have a budget presentation before the introduction of ways and means legislation.

I agree with that statement. It makes sense to give the minister freedom to introduce some changes without a six-day debate. The citation is derived from a point of order raised by my friend, the hon. member for Edmonton West (Mr. Lambert), on March 20, 1972. On that occasion, the Speaker ruled that there was nothing wrong with bringing forward income tax measures from a previous budget without a new presentation. In turn, he was partially relying on a ruling made on October 22, 1962, at which time the then minister of finance had made a detailed economic statement at the resolution stage of an income tax ways and means motion.

There were objections to the procedure in 1962. But we should remember that there have been changes in the rules since 1962. We should remember that the House was able to debate a ways and means motion under the then existing rules. On that occasion, unanimous consent was given to allow the debate to be of a general economic one—quite different from the case last evening. At that time, the House was debating only one type of ways and means motion, and that was to amend the Income Tax Act.

In 1972, the House was again debating one type of change, again an Income Tax Act amendment. This was still a limited curtailment of the rights of the House because, by this time, the six-day budget debate had replaced the right to debate ways and means motions and the House debated only the bill. As everyone knows, the then government went further during the throne speech on October 20, 1977—just another step in the process of erosion. The then government made an econom-

ic statement and gave notice of ways and means motions regarding the Income Tax Act and the income tax application rules.

It is noteworthy that these measures were dependent on future administrative action or future amendments to the Income Tax Act and did not take effect immediately. There were no increases, only reductions. There were no amendments outlined to statutes other than the Income Tax Act.

Last night, despite the press statement, there were amendments; there were increases. Last night's case was completely different from the statement in 1977, which my friend no doubt would rely upon as some kind of precedent. Last night, we saw the full machinery of budgetary presentations and a full range of economic measures. The minister's only defence is that he lacked the courage to face all our economic problems and promised us another budget some time in the future. That is an apology, not a procedural argument, Madam Speaker.

Let us go over what happened last night. There were lock-ups for the press representatives because there was an opportunity to profit outside this House from advance knowledge. The minister spoke from a carefully prepared budget text. He even began his remarks at 8 p.m. on Monday, which is a traditional budget hour. He gave us a forecast of Canada's economic prospects and the projected deficit. More important, he tabled ways and means motions on all of the usual budgetary statutes. There are amendments to the Income Tax Act, the income tax application rules, the Excise Tax Act, and the Customs Act. Some of these provisions took effect at midnight last night. This is what happens when a budget is presented.

This was no statement. This was no summary that the minister was giving us. This was a real budget which today—as of midnight last night—is taking money out the pockets of Canadians. It is quite a different situation from that which occurred in 1977. These measures were drawn from a budget that was specifically rejected by this House and put forward by a government which was defeated largely on the terms of that budget.

The minister has no right whatsoever to pick and choose and say that the House and the electorate liked this, or did not like this or that tax. He must submit the statement of budgetary policy to this House and receive the general approval of the House in the terms of the usual motion. As great a parliamentarian as the hon. gentleman may be, he has no right to draw some sort of mystical mandate from the House and set a budgetary course for Canada by executive decree. That is precisely what he tried to do last night.

● (1210)

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Baker (Nepean-Carleton): There have been previous mini-budgets that have followed the proper procedures, and this should have been done last night. It is silly to point to the speech that my colleague from St. John's West (Mr. Crosbie) made last summer and say that he is doing the same thing. The former minister of finance, the hon. member for St. John's