

[Translation]

I am now ready to rule on the question of privilege raised on Friday, June 19, by the Hon. Member for Saint-Jacques. The basis of the Hon. Member's complaint is his assertion that misleading information was provided to the House concerning the government's White Paper on Tax Reform.

[English]

The Minister of Finance (Mr. Wilson) had stated quite clearly that the White Paper was not a Budget, and that statement was several times reiterated. However, on June 17, the day before the tabling of the White Paper, the Minister said:

It is quite clear that a Ways and Means motion will be tabled tomorrow evening.

The Right Hon. Prime Minister (Mr. Mulroney), in answer to a question asked on June 18, confirmed that the White Paper was not a Budget. The Prime Minister's exact words were:

It sets forth the general thrust of government thinking, but it is not a Budget in the sense that it does not, *per se*, take effect the very same day pursuant to a Ways and Means Motion.

[Translation]

The Hon. Member for Saint-Jacques pointed out that the White Paper was indeed accompanied by Ways and Means Motion implementing a number of tax changes.

[English]

There is no doubt that the White Paper sets out a very extensive plan of tax reform. Although it is yet to be implemented by a Budget presented in the form of the annual financial statement to which we are accustomed, the White Paper, as I said in a previous ruling, has important budgetary implications. It was, as the Hon. Member for Saint-Jacques noted, accompanied by a Ways and Means motion. However, that motion was not designed to implement the full content of the White Paper. The motion was limited in its effect and I would point out that Ways and Means motions are regularly tabled throughout the session. They are not restricted to the presentation of a Budget.

● (1510)

For this reason I do not think we can regard the tabling of a Ways and Means motion as in any way extraordinary simply because it coincided with the Minister's statement and presentation of the White Paper.

[Translation]

It was argued in the course of the discussion that, because of the budgetary implications of the White Paper, it should have been treated as a Budget statement and therefore be subject to a six day debate. The rights of Members, it was argued, have been infringed because they have been denied the debating opportunities normally associated with a Budget. This in itself

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is not a question of privilege but rather a point of order. However, it is clear that in the view of the Government, the White Paper is a set of proposals as distinct from a Budget. There was no intention of presenting a Budget and therefore under our rules, the claim to a six day debate could not be sustained. However, this would not rule out the possibility of an extended debate through negotiation by the House Leaders.

[English]

To return to the question of privilege, the Chair, while appreciating the concern expressed, cannot find any grounds to justify according the complaint precedence over other business. If some Hon. Members feel they were misled, they have avenues available to them to pursue their complaints. I would emphasize that it is possible to be misled without being deliberately misled. As Hon. Members know, if there were any suggestion of dishonest motivation, which in this case there was not, the only course would be to give notice of a substantive motion setting out the accusation in precise terms. The fact is that we are faced with a political issue on which views are deeply divided. This is not an unusual situation in this House and, unless any action were taken to infringe our right of free debate and free expression, we are not dealing with a matter involving privilege.

To conclude, I think it is fair for the Chair to observe that if one considers the two statements made there is some basis for Hon. Members to feel perhaps that the situation was not as clear as they might otherwise have wished it to be. I thank the Hon. Member and others for their interventions.

ALLEGED ACCOSTMENT BY MINISTER

Mr. Jim Fulton (Skeena): Mr. Speaker, I raise a very serious question of privilege. When I attempted to leave the Chamber less than two minutes ago I was physically accosted by the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans (Mr. Siddon) and called a liar. I expect both an apology for the physical accostment and the use of that word.

Mr. Speaker: The Hon. Member has raised a very serious allegation. I might begin by asking the Hon. Member if this alleged incident was in or out of the Chamber.

Mr. Fulton: Mr. Speaker, one of the Pages gave me a phone message and I went and picked up line two. I was just hanging up the phone when the Minister came up behind me, called me a liar, and then grabbed me. He is lucky I didn't loosen his teeth.

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Speaker: I guess the first thing I should note is that it is the last day of the session. I also note that the Hon. Minister has come into the Chamber. Perhaps he could adequately and satisfactorily resolve the problem by making a statement.