

Privilege—Mr. Riis

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Prud'homme: I would have immediately informed whoever is responsible for my Party about what was going on.

But what has happened today is the reason I want to be on record. I did not raise a question of privilege earlier because of what the Minister said during the Question Period.

Your Honour would rule me out of order eventually if I did not stand up today at the first opportunity, and that is why I am now taking the first opportunity to reserve my right to speak later after I have listened attentively to see if we cannot get out of this difficulty.

Your Honour will realize that last night it made no sense for the Minister to come here to participate, I thought in the debate—because that is what the rule is all about—but the Minister was recognized to participate in the debate. The rule is clear. It was during the last hour and, had the Minister taken the floor, he could have put the motion. But that is not what he chose to do. He just came in to put the motion. He lost the vote and he left. That is why I was running after him to tell him that I wanted to listen to the Minister participate in the debate.

This is the explanation I want to make at this time because my intervention would not make sense if I did not give that explanation.

Mr. Speaker: I think the proper thing to do would be for the Chair to consider the remarks of the Hon. Member for Port Moody—Coquitlam (Mr. Waddell) and others. I will consider them at the close of the entire debate on privilege.

The Hon. Member for Kamloops (Mr. Riis) has the floor.

Mr. Nelson A. Riis (Kamloops): Mr. Speaker, I want to continue my remarks by running through in logical sequence what happened last night. We believe that there has been a very serious breach of Parliamentary privilege. We are aware that sometime yesterday definitive evidence indicates that there was a Budget leak. The Minister of Justice (Mr. Lewis) described it in those words when he called the two opposition Party leaders late last night indicating that there had been a serious Budget leak and that the House of Commons ought then to resume to allow the Minister of Finance (Mr. Wilson) an opportunity to present the Budget.

New evidence today in the press indicates that there was a possibility that some people even had the Budget a day or two in advance. They say in the press today that not only did they have a copy of the Budget but they presented the information to at least 20 other people. What has become clear is not only was there a Budget leak, but there was the possibility at least of a number of copies of the Budget circulating beyond Parliament Hill.

The Solicitor General (Mr. Blais) indicated today that he believes there is a serious possibility of a comprehensive extensive leak so he has asked for the Securities Exchange Commissions to carry out investigations in terms of insider trading. The Minister of Finance knows all about insider trading because of his previous career as a stockbroker. I think he understands the value of this kind of information. We found out later that the Minister of Finance was informed precisely of the details of the Budget at 5.30 p.m. At that time, he informed the Minister of Justice, the Government House Leader, of this possibility.

Those Ministers had an opportunity at that time to share this information with the House of Commons, and certainly with the House Leaders of the opposition Parties, but they chose not to do that and attempted some spurious argument to enable the House to continue. I have to say that was almost misleading the House because they knew why they were asking for an extension of the hours but did not explain it. As a matter of fact, they gave the wrong explanation. We found later that the Budget had now gone public as a result of broadcasting. At that time the Government asked that the House of Commons resume sitting. We, of course, realized at that point it would be folly to do so because the Budget was public and the people across Canada, hundreds of thousands of Canadians, already knew the details of the Budget. It seemed to be after the fact and we were not interested in being part of a cover-up operation or a last minute rescue operation to try to save the faces of the Minister of Finance and the Prime Minister (Mr. Mulroney).

It becomes clear that a number of privileged individuals may have had privileged information in order to advance their own monetary standing. That is a possibility. There is no question of that. Yet the Minister of Finance refused to resign. In my estimation, this is a very clear indication of incompetence on behalf of the Minister and his House Leader. Rather than come clean with the House of Commons, they chose to, if you like, launch a cover-up operation, again misleading the House of Commons, again an act of incompetence in his role as Government House Leader. Yet the Prime Minister