

claiming that, in some way, the privileges of hon. members are being eroded.

May I point out, with all due respect, that when the rules of this House are clearly being respected the privileges of hon. members are not being violated even if past practice has not always been the same. How strange that every time standard practices are not strictly adhered to here in the House, everyone becomes excited, it almost becomes a scandal, even when the rules are still being respected. The House can act in many various ways within the framework of our Standing Orders. But it seems there are some who cling so much to tradition that they would have the House react, in absolutely every thing, in exactly the same way, to the Standing Orders of the House.

Madam Speaker, I do not agree with that way of thinking. I see no reason for it and when our rules give us sufficient leeway—of course, that supposes some broadmindedness, there I agree with the hon. member for Nepean-Carleton—when our rules allow us to act according to them, even if it is not exactly the same way as in the past. Provided we respect the Standing Orders of the House and act in parliamentary fashion, I say there is no reason to dramatize the situation, or to drag out the debates unduly or to rise on questions of privilege which are unfounded.

So, in conclusion, Madam Speaker, to solve the matter once and for all, I would respectfully submit that we are only dealing here with the integral application of Standing Orders 60(1) and 60(11) as explained clearly and specifically in Beauchesne's citations found on pages 174 and 175 of the fifth edition.

Madam Speaker: I would like to point out that indeed all comments by hon. members are useful for me to rule on the question of privilege raised by the hon. member for Nepean-Carleton (Mr. Baker). I will surely hear the two members who have already asked to speak, but I would urge them to limit themselves to new arguments, as should any other member wishing to rise after them.

[English]

Mr. Arnold Malone (Crowfoot): Madam Speaker, I want to share with you my best wishes on this very momentous day when the decision you make will reflect significantly on the direction of our Parliament, and I want to extend my best wishes on what I feel is an extremely important question that faces you.

What I sense we have before us today is, in its simplest form, the question of whether or not last night's performance was or was not, however we define it, in fact a budget. The Minister of Finance (Mr. MacEachen) has suggested today that it was clear that last night his speech was not a budget speech. I submit that if that were the case, then that should be clear to this Parliament, which obviously it is not, and it should be clear to outside observers, which obviously it is not. They are referring to this as a mini-budget or an economic

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statement, and they are giving to it a diversity of descriptions, which certainly means that it is not clear to them what it is.

● (1500)

I would like to make a couple of points, one of which certainly has not been made up to this point. When the Minister of Finance submits that he brought this matter up during the throne speech debate so that we would have the opportunity to reflect upon it, in fact the minister is attempting to direct the throne speech debate, because members set aside what they came to this Parliament to speak about in what has been an assured period of totally free time for all members. It is an interjection therein which diverts members away from their free will. There is a very serious obligation on the part of any who are finance critics or associated with finance to cut down out of necessity the throne speech debate in order to give consideration to another matter placed before Parliament. Thus it would be irresponsible of opposition members not to comment thereon.

Keeping that in mind, and if we accept the explanation of the Minister of Finance, in effect the introduction of such a motion as the one last evening could totally do away with the concept of a throne speech debate, where members have the freedom to bring up constituency and regional issues. If I were able to catch Madam Speaker's eye during a throne speech debate, I would feel almost compelled to bring to the attention of Parliament the kind of antics which have taken place lately that bring about a tremendous alienation of the region of Canada from where I come. To somehow feel a diversion would be a great insult to my opportunity to be able to speak freely on some subject.

I should like to turn to another subject area which I think is specific and important to the question which relates to what happened last night. When Madam Speaker takes a look at the motion, I would ask that she consider the importance which has been traditionally attached to what we call the security or secrecy of budgets. That tradition is long and well-defined.

In Great Britain ministers of finance have resigned because of alleged budget leaks and leaks established by Parliament. In this Parliament some five or six years ago, the House will recall the review of statements made by the hon. member for Kenora-Rainy River (Mr. Reid). For much of that very hot July of that summer, members on both sides of the House sat to see whether there was a leak of security by knowledge which the hon. member for Kenora-Rainy River may have had or by statements he may have made. Certainly to the gratification of Parliament and I am sure to the relief of the hon. member, it was found that there was no substantive evidence to show that there had been a leak. What I am attempting to put before Madam Speaker is the importance of the view which has existed over the long 700 years of tradition of Parliament, the view that there is nothing more important in terms of secrecy than the budget.

Last night there were lockups and handouts of the statement made, there were amendments to the Income Tax Act and the Customs Act, and new taxes were to take effect at midnight.