

The Budget

today and the notice was put on the Order Paper for that one on November 24.

I respectfully request the hon. parliamentary secretary to give the House the information to which we are entitled. In fact, for the one he has dealt with today he has refused the information. I think it is evidence of an attempt by the government to cover up the facts and to stop Parliament from having access to the information that Parliament is entitled to have.

Mr. Cooper: Mr. Speaker, after listening to the hon. member I am a little confused. Was he referring to his Question No. 214, or was he referring to Motions for Papers P-16 and P-18?

Mr. Milliken: I am referring to Motions for Papers P-16 and P-18. Those are the same motions I referred to in my point of order on February 14, Valentine's Day, when the parliamentary secretary was so kind-hearted.

Mr. Cooper: Mr. Speaker, I am sure I was kind-hearted because it was Valentine's Day and I was thinking of my sister who celebrates her birthday that day. It put me in a very good mood.

The bottom line is that in looking at the information I have it looks as though those two motions should be dealt with fairly soon. I gather that they are with the chiefs of staff from the two departments and I should be seeing them relatively quickly. I will do my best, as I always do for this particular hon. member, to try to get them in as quickly as I can.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

THE BUDGET

FINANCIAL STATEMENT OF THE MINISTER OF FINANCE

The House resumed from Tuesday, March 6, consideration of the motion of Mr. Wilson (Etobicoke Centre) that this House approves in general the budgetary policy of the government.

Mr. Milliken: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order.

This is a debate on the budget, as Your Honour has heard, the principal financial statement of the government, and there is not a single member of the government in the House to hear this debate. I think it is an outrage and they have an obligation to be here.

Mr. Cooper: Mr. Speaker, two people can play the game when we get into the question of absence of members of the House of Commons. Even though he has not been here that long, the hon. member has a lot of parliamentary experience. He knows that comment is out of order.

Second, I also want to say to the hon. member that we have been dealing with petitions and a number of things. We will have our ministers here in the House to make sure they listen to this important debate, because we believe it is important.

Mr. Gauthier: Mr. Speaker, just to re-emphasize the point. Indeed, it would be nice if a minister of the Crown could listen to one of his own members, who is commenting in a debate that is of very great importance to Canadians, the budget. We would like to have one minister in the House; two if they could. That would be ordinary and customary.

Mr. Cooper: Mr. Speaker, I want to assure my friends that it is a custom that we always try to accommodate. I have certainly sent out word to get in a couple of ministers.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): I think we can carry on with debate with the hon. member for St. Catharines.

Mr. Ken Atkinson (St. Catharines): Mr. Speaker, I might indicate that my intention is to have a 10-minute speech and a 5-minute question and answer period and share my time with one of my colleagues.

I am pleased today to take part in the debate approving in general the budgetary policy of the government. This is the sixth budget brought in by the Minister of Finance, and he has continued his record of fiscal responsibility to deal with the legacy of debt left by the previous administration, while at the same time creating the climate for non-inflationary economic growth.

As a result of policies aimed squarely at spending restraint, the government has reduced the deficit from its peak of \$38.3 billion in 1984 to \$30.5 billion in the last fiscal year. That is a decline of almost \$8 billion, and this