

There is no question, if you take the transcript of what was given by Mr. Oliver on CTV news on December 10, that you will find that he was more right in his discussion of what was going to be in the budget than was the Minister of Finance, in his rebuttal. Let me give you a couple of examples.

The Minister of Finance said that Mr. Oliver was wrong in his discussion of the increased taxes on corporations. Mr. Oliver said there was going to be an increase of five points in the corporate tax rates from 46 per cent to 51 per cent. The 5 per cent figure was correct. What Mr. Oliver got wrong was not that there was going to be an increase in the tax rate, but that it was going to be a surtax. The total amount of revenue to be raised over the life of that tax he said was going to be \$1 billion, not the figure given by the Minister of Finance which was for one year. I would suggest in that case that the Minister of Finance has misled the House.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

An hon. Member: Withdraw.

Mr. Reid: I think if you go on to the other point that the Minister of Finance dwelt a great deal upon, it was that Mr. Oliver's statement was that the excise tax would be a 25-cent one, when it was only going to be 18. Let us read what Mr. Oliver actually said:

—Mr. Crosbie will impose a twenty-five cent transportation fuel excise tax—

What is the value of that tax, Mr. Speaker? It is 25 cents. He has raised it from seven cents to 25 cents, and that is what Mr. Oliver said.

I think when you look at what is there and you take a look at the evidence, you will have to decide that Mr. Oliver had more accurate information than in respect of previous budgets we have had, particularly if Your Honour goes back and looks at other points in time when allegations of the same sort were raised against ministers of finance. Those allegations, after those budgets came down, were never seen to be as accurate as these particular allegations were in this specific case. It is for that reason we feel there is a question of privilege.

We think also that if Your Honour finds there is a *prima facie* case of privilege we should also have the reference expanded in order that we could look into the question of budgetary secrecy.

I agree with the Minister of Finance and the former minister of finance in thinking that the system we have entraps us into a situation where often we have to go the hard route of raising these matters on a question of privilege, and there ought to be other ways of resolving the difficulty. Successive ministers of finance have argued that there, indeed, is a real problem in terms of this matter, and we agree that it should be cleared up.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The House will understand, of course, that I am faced with an intervention by the hon. Minister of Finance (Mr. Crosbie) in which he has directly and categorically denied that there was any leak for which he assumes responsibility.

Privilege—Mr. Chrétien

The House has several traditions, one of which is related to budgetary secrecy. The House also has the very firm and very strong tradition that it always accepts the word of any member given in debate in this House. When the Minister of Finance at any time stands in his place and says, as he has said today, that there is no leak, that he has examined and attempted to discover whether there was and finds none, and therefore does not take responsibility for one and, furthermore, disputes the fact that one in fact took place, that word must be accepted. Therefore, I am not able now to take action which would amount to a contradiction of that word unless, of course, there is a proposal by the House to directly contradict the word of the Minister of Finance in the debate today by accusing him, or someone else, specifically of taking responsibility, or failing in their responsibility, to safeguard budgetary secrecy. That allegation has not been made in this motion, and if there is any basis for such an allegation it will have to be made specifically.

● (1530)

There is a very clear rule which was enunciated by one of my most distinguished predecessors, former Speaker Michener, that to accuse a member of this House of misconduct in any way, and to expect that that accusation can be sent to the Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections for investigation and examination, the allegation of misconduct by a member will have to be clear. The minister has stood in his place and denied that he is responsible for any leak and wishes to argue, as he has said, that there is not in fact any leak at all. On the face of that, I have to set aside the question of privilege, after having permitted, I think, ample contribution by the mover and the seconder of the motion.

I cannot find on the face of the motion, as I am being asked to find, that there has been a publication, even if I were to be persuaded that the publication would appear to be based in some way on a theft of the budget document, as the result of a leak. The fact of an accurate appraisal or prediction of what is in a budget by an outside source speaks in and of itself and on its own merits the fact that a transgression of the practices of the House has taken place, is not enough to constitute an investigation. I need something more than merely the existence of the prediction, a prediction with which the Minister of Finance takes issue. Therefore, the motion in its form does not allege any misconduct by the minister.

It is a motion based simply on the existence of a report by the reporter who was referred to in the argument. In view of the fact that the Minister of Finance has indicated, first, that he differs with that prediction and, secondly, having investigated the matter and indicated to the House that he is satisfied that there has been no leak and that he is certainly not responsible for it, the House, in its traditions, accepts the word of the Minister of Finance. On that basis, the matter remains closed.

However, if a member wishes specifically to raise an allegation at any time, as was the case with respect to the hon. member for Kenora-Rainy River (Mr. Reid) when the motion made special reference to him, he may do so. When the matter