

Privilege

Mr. Lewis: It may be out of order to read the notes—

Mr. Lapierre: Don't abuse the rules.

Mr. Lewis: If one reads it one will see that it refers specifically to the House being recessed during the calendar, not overnight. I submit it would have been an abuse to go before—

Mr. Gray (Windsor West): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order.

Mr. Speaker: Perhaps the Hon. Member for Windsor West (Mr. Gray) could indicate before he gets into argument what his point of order is.

Mr. Gray (Windsor West): It is my understanding that when what is called the Annotated Standing Orders of the House of Commons were tabled in this House it was stated by you, Sir, that the annotations were not to be referred to in argument. If that is correct then I would like to draw that to the attention of the Minister of Justice (Mr. Lewis).

Mr. Speaker: I think the Minister of Justice had put aside the annotated notes and was arguing freely.

Mr. Lewis: Surely the point is that we sought the co-operation of the Right Hon. Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Turner) and the Leader of the New Democratic Party—officers of this House. We sought that co-operation. It was not forthcoming because when we phoned back they said: "No, I am sorry, we cannot co-operate".

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Lewis: "We cannot co-operate. We can go to a press conference but we cannot come back to this House of Commons. We can go to the other side of Wellington Street but we cannot come to the House of Commons".

Some Hon. Members: Shame!

Mr. Lewis: We sought that co-operation in the best traditions of this House—

Mr. Riis: That is a cover-up.

Mr. Lewis:—and it was denied to us. Under those circumstances the Minister of Finance (Mr. Wilson) went before the media and disclosed all the contents of the Budget.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Lewis: In keeping with the traditions of this House the full copies were tabled with the Clerk. We went public as soon as we could, in a responsible manner.

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Lewis: That is the issue. There have been a great many comments about precedents. There have been references to them but nobody has cared to get much into the meat of the precedents.

In 1936 in the United Kingdom there was some unusual activity in the insurance market. There was a tribunal held. It was concluded that a Cabinet Minister, not the Chancellor of the Exchequer, had leaked budget information for personal gains of a private citizen. The Minister resigned.

Mr. Lapierre: Good precedent.

Mr. Lewis: In 1947 in the United Kingdom, and this is the famous Dalton case, on his way in to deliver a Budget the Chancellor of the Exchequer in an offhand remark said something to a reporter such as: "You'd better buy your cigarettes now because the price is going up tonight".

Ms. Copps: What happened?

Mr. Lewis: This is what happened. The Minister resigned.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Axworthy (Winnipeg South Centre): One hell of a precedent.

Mr. Lewis: The distinction of course is that there is no direct relation in this case between the Minister of Finance and the stolen Budget document—none whatsoever. There is no suggestion of that at all.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Lewis: In that case the Minister gave the information away. In this case our Minister has no connection with that document.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Lewis: Now I would like to get to the Canadian precedents if I may, Mr. Speaker.

In March, 1982, details of the Saskatchewan Budget were aired on CBC television three days before the Budget. The Minister tabled his Budget as planned and although he was reported to have tendered his resignation, it was not accepted. He did not resign. That distinguishes that precedent.