

Privilege

I notice that the Minister was playing to the cameras, as he usually does on Budget afternoon. This is not a matter for the camera. This one is for the House of Commons. This is one of those important times in the history of Canada when no presidential style of Government can prevail. This is the House of Commons of Canada and we will have something to say about that.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Turner (Vancouver Quadra): What we are talking about is absolutely unprecedented in the history of our country. It is unprecedented in the history of our Parliament. It is unprecedented in the history of parliamentary democracy as we know it.

We are dealing with the fundamental role of Parliament, Parliament having the right to approve taxation and approve expenditures as against the Crown, as against the Government of the day. That is why we are before Your Honour on the most serious matter that I can recall in my lifetime in Parliament.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Clark (Yellowhead): The cause of his life.

Mr. Turner (Vancouver Quadra): Because of the importance of the matter, Mr. Speaker, I know you will allow me the indulgence to bring the full issue before Your Honour, Members of the House and thereby the country.

The role of Parliament is believed to have existed from the year 1265 A.D., when the Commons was first summoned by Simon de Montfort for the purpose of discussing and raising new taxes. This concept is fundamental and historic. We are dealing, therefore, with the principal issue of this country's form of democracy, an issue that stretches back 724 years, an issue with a history that exists from 602 years before the creation of our own Confederation. Since 1265 it has been a fundamental principle of parliamentary democracy that the House of Commons, the elected representatives of the people, have control over all new taxes, all alterations in taxes, and all new expenditures or cutting of expenditures. That is the issue.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Turner (Vancouver Quadra): The Government may try to trivialize this as a minor theft. This is the issue for which, before the British House of Commons, the commoners put a King to death. This is an issue over which the United States went to revolution. This is the fundamental issue of taxation and representation. That is what it is.

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Turner (Vancouver Quadra): The Prime Minister (Mr. Mulroney) scoffs. Before this debate is over the Prime Minister will learn what parliamentary democracy is all about.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Turner (Vancouver Quadra): Whether or not the Prime Minister or the Minister of Finance (Mr. Wilson) recognize it, the principle about which we are talking is fundamental. It is the principle upon which our parliamentary democracy resides. It is a principle which has been asserted time and time again in the statutes of the western world. It is a principle which was assented to in the British North American Act, 1867 and reconfirmed in the Constitution Act, 1982. It is the principle which is asserted in the written procedures of every parliament throughout the world.

It is the principle which is asserted and reasserted in the unwritten practice of every parliament throughout the world. The primacy of the House of Commons in tax matters is to protect the public. It is not a constitutional myth. It is not a parliamentary fiction. The Minister of Finance comes before Parliament so that no one gets an advantage, a benefit, an insider advantage, and the people of Canada are treated fairly. That is the reason.

Mr. Clark (Yellowhead): Why did you refuse to come to work last night?

Mr. Turner (Vancouver Quadra): The primacy of the House of Commons and budget secrecy have had as their fundamental *raison d'être* the protection of all our citizens from those who could accumulate private gain at the expense of the uninformed.

I say this is a privilege of the House, as a House of Commons, a privilege of every Member sitting in this place, but it is a privilege which we exercise in a custodial and fiduciary fashion on behalf of 11 million Canadian taxpayers and 26 million Canadians. Twenty-six million Canadians must not be prey to those who may have a hidden advantage, an advance over the rest of us, for their own benefit. The present unauthorized advanced release, not of an item in the Budget nor of an individual tax, but of the entire Budget is unprecedented in 724 years of parliamentary history. It is the largest and most serious violation of parliamentary budget secrecy in 724 years and in any parliamentary democracy in the world. I am therefore stunned that the Prime Minister and the Minister of Finance do not understand the primary responsibility of parliamentary tradition and history. The issue is whether the Prime Minister and the Minister of