

The Budget—Mr. Wilson

The difficulty the Speaker is in, in this present situation, is that while fully understanding the position of the Official Opposition and the New Democratic Party and fully understanding the reason for it, the fact of the matter is that we now have a House Order, which was passed by the House. I can see no way that I can unilaterally change that.

This House Order could be changed, of course, if the House wishes to direct me in that way, but I have not received such a direction. I am bound to follow it unless, of course, I am directed otherwise. As I say, the House has not done so.

• (1740)

There was another argument advanced, that is, that the Budget ought not to go ahead until the argument over privilege—because there are a number of privilege applications all being heard in one debate—is completed.

I am continuing to hear argument on what may or may not be a contempt of this House. I do not prejudge that. While the matter to be heard under this special House Order that I have described, and the questions of contempt and privilege are related questions, I have looked at them carefully and it is my view that they are not dependent one upon the other. Each stands alone as a unique proceeding.

The Speaker cannot foresee the future, that is, what the House may eventually do if there is a prima facie case of contempt or privilege. As I said, I intend to hear further argument on the privilege matter. It is not closed off this afternoon by any means.

However, while I do not know what may eventually happen on the privilege issue, I do know what the House has done with the special House Order. I must advise Hon. Members that I am bound by it. Therefore, it is my duty to recognize the Hon. Minister of Finance.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*English*]

THE BUDGET

FINANCIAL STATEMENT OF THE MINISTER OF FINANCE

The House resumed consideration of the motion of Mr. Wilson (Etobicoke Centre) that this House approves in general the budgetary policy of the Government.

Hon. Michael Wilson (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, I expressed this morning my regret at not being able to deliver my Budget speech first to the House of Commons. Members on all sides have debated the circumstances surrounding this matter during the course of today.

Let me now make some summary comments about my Budget, a Budget which I view as most significant for Canadians.

It is important for Members of the House and all Canadians to understand the budgetary policy that has shaped the measures in the documents that I am tabling today.

[*Translation*]

It is also important to understand the major economic and social objectives which our policies will help achieve.

[*English*]

Our Budget is designed to deal with the over-arching national problem that stands between Canadians and a better future for ourselves and for our children: our large and growing public debt.

It is now more than \$320 billion. The debt is more than 20 times larger than it was in the mid-1970s when it began to grow faster than the national economy. Interest payments on the debt will require more than one-third of all government revenues this year.

As a Government, we recognized the threat posed by the debt and its enormous momentum of growth when we came to office four and one-half years ago.

As part of a broad agenda of action to strengthen the foundations of Canada's economy, we acted to slow the growth of debt by reducing the annual deficit. We succeeded in reducing the growth of the debt from almost 24 per cent in 1984 to less than 10 per cent last year.

During the same period, the Canadian economy generated substantial growth. It created one and one-half million new jobs and expanded faster than most other industrial nations.

The paramount fiscal policy objective of this Government is to continue getting the public debt under control through deficit reduction, and to reinforce the policies that helped to achieve the record of fiscal and economic progress.