

Privilege—Mr. W. Baker

effect with respect to detailed information on the estimates, although it has not been observed by certain sectors of the media. Consequently, he could not answer questions on the estimates. This is another strong argument, Madam Speaker, why you should find that a prima facie case exists so that this matter can go to the Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections. Let the facts be established.

Why should every news media say that release of this information was granted to them by the government House leader if he did not do it? The government House leader says he did not do it, so there must be some kind of mix up. Who did it? In any event, we know that due to the gross negligence of the President of the Treasury Board, information on the estimates went out over the Canadian Press wires after 3.45 p.m. We know that the information went to their clients in the news business. We know that it went to certain embassies, including the embassy of the United States of America. That is certainly publication of the estimates.

Your Honour might ask what the difference is if this went out. The difference is, Madam Speaker, that people had information in their hands which was not available to the rest of the world until all of this information was released by somebody, the press in any event, at 6.40 p.m. Therefore, a number of things could happen. For example, do the estimates show that the government will really battle inflation? Is it reducing the deficit for 1981-82 in some meaningful manner? A look at the estimates would reveal that, no, it is not serious about inflation. So, one would have to take that into consideration with what will happen to the Canadian dollar, what will happen with interest rates and that kind of thing. That is the kind of information which went out to certain privileged persons at 3.45 yesterday afternoon, which other persons did not receive until after 6.40 p.m.

I would like to refer to the same article prepared by the research branch of the Library of Parliament which was cited by the hon. member for York-Peel (Mr. Stevens). I am looking now at page 25:71 where the importance attached to financial measures is being discussed. Financial measures do not just include the budget speech which was brought down on budget night, in this case on October 28. Financial measures include tax legislation, changes in the Excise Tax Act, the Customs Act, etc. It is the estimates which carry out the expenditure side of the budget plan as presented on budget night. This is all part of the budgetary process. I quote from the article:

On the spending side, the BNA Act requires that measures involving the spending of public funds be introduced by the cabinet.

I emphasize "introduced by the cabinet". This is the first place they are to be introduced. They are not to be introduced to the public or the media in a secret lock-up held in Room 200 of the West Block. As I understand it, you, Madam Speaker, representing us, the members of the House of Commons of Canada control Room 200 in the West Block. Yet that part of the parliamentary premises was used by the President of the Treasury Board to bring in a certain favoured group of people—the media of Canada or their representatives—to give them information on the estimates. This is part

of the budgetary process, part of the financial measures which he was to introduce into the House of Commons. He excluded members of the House and, as a result of his actions, his lack of care and concern, his contempt for the members of this House, at 3.45 p.m. yesterday afternoon this information went over the wires to a number of news and radio stations across the country. At 6.40 p.m. because of somebody's additional negligence—it is alleged to be that of the government House leader who denies it—the rest of the world received the information. Therefore, we want to have the facts established. Is the government House leader right? Of course, I accept what the government House leader says as being correct. But I do not think the *Montreal Gazette* will. I do not think the *Canadian Press* will. I do not think they just made it up, so there must be some explanation.

Returning to the document which I cited from before, it goes on to read:

The close control exercised by the cabinet thus brings financial measures within the shield of cabinet secrecy and cabinet solidarity.

Further on in the document it is stated:

Today, the budget is not delivered until the stock markets have closed across the country.

The stock markets were not closed yesterday afternoon at 3.45 p.m. when this information went out over the wires. The stock exchange does not close until 4 p.m. in Toronto. It does not close until several hours later in Vancouver.

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

Mr. Crosbie: A point of order! It is a point of shame when you get up.

Mr. Johnston: Would the hon. member for St. John's West (Mr. Crosbie) entertain a brief, simple question?

Mr. Beatty: On a question of privilege?

Madam Speaker: It is not at all usual. I would prefer if the hon. minister would, instead, rise on a point of order, if he has one. The hon. member for St. John's West (Mr. Crosbie) can answer the question if he consents. It really is not usual procedure.

Mr. Crosbie: I do not want to take much time—

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

An hon. Member: What a joker!

Mr. Crosbie: I would entertain—

Mr. Johnston: Madam Speaker—

Madam Speaker: Order, please. Two members cannot have the floor at the same time. The two hon. gentlemen are standing. I am asking the hon. member for St. John's West if he will entertain a question?