

Privilege—Mr. W. Baker

working together well. I do not think that what happened last night would give that impression.

The Minister of Finance says that he has leaned over backwards, he has done this on day five of the throne speech debate and there are three days left. This is the argument every time. It was the argument in the Donald Fleming case in 1957 and it has been the argument, in all those instances where budgets were bootlegged in in some other way, that members can still speak. But in the throne speech debate, especially in the first session of a new Parliament, there are many new members wanting to speak. There are a dozen or more in our party who would like to speak and do not have a chance. We cannot replace them by our leader and have him speak again. We had planned that our finance critic would not speak in the throne speech debate, but that he would wait for the budget debate. The chance of our members taking part in the debate on the budget in these three remaining days—and we will lose half of today on this question of privilege—is very small.

The minister might have chosen the vehicle of a statement on what we call motions, but it is really on statements by ministers, with the opposition parties having the right to respond or ask questions. But no, he feels he did the fair thing; he told us about it. However, when I saw the statement it seemed to me to go much further than I had thought from what he had said. I think the suggestion that the opportunity is there to comment is really meaningless.

● (1250)

It is in Madam Speaker's hands to study the precedents and decide what to do with the motion put forward by the hon. member for Nepean-Carleton (Mr. Baker). I think perhaps better than a committee study of that kind of thing would be a real heart-to-heart session among House leaders.

Mr. Clark: No, let's have it public.

Mr. Knowles: Perhaps even some other ministers and other members could be there as well to face up to the fact that the success of this Parliament two years, three years, or four years down the road depends on this government realizing that it does not own this place, that it has a majority but that we are here too. Just the bare fact that we had this hassle last night and that we are having this session today proves that members are not satisfied, that there was not sufficient consultation. I hope that the government will take these things to heart.

As I say, I leave it to Your Honour whether you rule that there is a question of privilege of the procedural or parliamentary kind that the hon. member for Nepean-Carleton is claiming, but I feel very strongly that before we go any further we should consider how we are going to run this Parliament. We have obligations too. We on this side of the House have to be responsible. We have to do our job. We must not obstruct and all that kind of thing, but the government must come to the realization that the country does not trust it as much as that majority seems to suggest.

We went through this some years ago. We had the 1972-1974 minority experience. We think that it was a pretty good Parliament; we got several things out of the government. Then the 1974 election gave them the majority and some members on the Liberal side of the House said to me then, "I hope we do not revert to the pre-1972 stance; I hope we learned a lesson in the 1972-1974 period". No, within a couple of weeks they were right back. From 1974 to 1979 it was the God-given Liberals running the show.

An hon. Member: So what's new?

Mr. Knowles: Then we had a few months last year when we had a respite from the Liberals. They are back now, and even I said on the radio before the session started that they might take a different attitude. They are not, in doing it this way and I plead for them to reconsider their attitude.

I thank the minister for having told me last week that he would be making his speech last night. If there is a misunderstanding between us as to what he meant by saying that it would not be a budget, which some of us think it is, I am sorry there is that misunderstanding. But to me this whole incident should lead to some pretty serious conversations among us, and it should lead the Liberal government of this country to the realization that just because it has 147 members does not mean that it owns the place. It has to operate in a way of complete consultation with the opposition parties. It has to make the people out there feel that it is helping to lead Parliament to constructive things, not just running Parliament the way it wants.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. John C. Crosbie (St. John's West): Madam Speaker, I want to address myself to some of the remarks which the Minister of Finance (Mr. MacEachen) has made. In considering this matter, it is very clear that there is no correspondence at all and no similarity to the statement I made on July 26, 1979, on tax and tariff measures. There were two statements, and I have both of them here. One was on the fiscal and economic situation, and the other was on the tax and tariff measures that were made on July 26 which had to be made for good reason.

On November 16 or 18—I think it was on November 16, 1978, that a budget was brought into this House. That budget was not defeated. The House did not repudiate the budget, but some of the measures in that budget were not passed, were not put forward to this House for passage. The then Liberal government, in its usual way, did not care whether it got these measures passed or not. They had announced that they would all go into effect on budget night whether or not the House passed any legislation. So the then House leader was not able to get amendments to the Customs Act, the Income Tax Act and the Excise Tax Act passed through the House by March.

In March, the then prime minister finally dissolved the House, or asked the Governor General for a dissolution. Of course, he was into his fifth year and that is probably a precedent for what will happen this time. He will be in his fifth