

Privilege

the wire. But when that reporter held up a copy of the pamphlet entitled *Budget in Brief*, it became evident to the Government that—

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Lewis: —this was much more than informed speculation, that there was in fact a theft of Budget material. I think you would find the record would show that when the Right Hon. Leader of the Opposition spoke, and when the Leader of the New Democratic Party spoke, we asked our Members to give them the courtesy that they were owed in this House—

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Speaker: The Hon. Minister.

Mr. Lewis: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The question becomes, and this is the question that the people are asking, what did the Government do?

An Hon. Member: When did the Government do it? When did the Government know it?

An Hon. Member: That is the question.

An Hon. Member: Shame on you.

Mr. Lewis: Immediately that seven o'clock program confirmed that there had been a theft of Budget material, the Prime Minister (Mr. Mulroney) convened a group of senior Ministers and officials to discuss what action we should take to properly correct a very serious situation. We met, we considered and we acted. Here is the important point: We have talked about traditions in this place and there are some traditions. If you want to bring one tradition into play, you bring them all into play.

An Hon. Member: Hear, hear!

Mr. Lewis: There are some traditions, and I will get to the proof a little later on, that prevail. We acted immediately. I did it myself. The Right Hon. Leader of the Opposition will know this. At 8.05 p.m., I phoned the Right Hon. Leader of the Opposition and I advised him of the following. This is what I said because I read from notes.

An Hon. Member: Did you tape it?

Mr. Lewis: No, absolutely not. You know me better than that. You know me better than that. I do not for a minute suggest that you taped me, sir.

Mr. Turner (Vancouver Quadra): No, sir, it was not worth it.

Mr. Lewis: I said this: "Somebody in a position of public trust has leaked Budget information to the public and we must act quickly and responsibly. I ask for your co-operation to call the House into session tonight in order that the public be informed as soon as possible and the Minister may deliver his Budget in the House of Commons."

An Hon. Member: Did you go to the Speaker?

Mr. Lewis: I will get to that in a minute. The Right Hon. Leader of the Opposition said: "I understand this. I'll get back to you or call me back.", telephones being what they are these days. The same call was placed at 8.10 p.m. to the Leader of the New Democratic Party and the same message was given to him. He said: "I'll get back to you or you get back to me". We took these right hon. gentlemen at their word.

An Hon. Member: Why did you not speak to the Speaker?

Mr. Lewis: There has been a suggestion, and let me deal with that now, that we should have used Standing Order 28(3). It is our position that we have every right to use the rules but we have no right to abuse the rules.

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Lewis: At six o'clock last evening the Speaker rose and said, and I am paraphrasing, this House stands adjourned until 11 a.m. tomorrow morning. That is notice to every Member in this House, be that the Government side or Opposition or even my friend from the independent Party. That is the notice that she and every Member is entitled to, that there is no more Government business until 11 o'clock tomorrow morning. It is our position that had we tried to approach the Speaker under Standing Order 28(3), we would have found ourselves in the wrong court. That rule is for use by the Government as follows:

28. (3) Whenever the House stands adjourned, if the Speaker is satisfied, after consultation with the Government, that the public interest requires that the House should meet at an earlier time, the Speaker may give notice—and thereupon the House shall meet to transact its business—

Et cetera. If one reads the annotated notes—

• (1210)

Mr. Boudria: That is out of order.