

*Borrowing Authority*

My argument or my submission to Your Honour is that whether or not there was a criminal action, the senior Ministers had absolutely no proof for their words last week. Of course, they are now backing out. Yesterday, the Minister of Justice said that the Prime Minister was talking—and I am using the Minister's words—about “a crime in the vernacular”. Now that is something new. This was not a statutory crime. This was not a common law crime. This was not a crime of the mind or of conscience. This was a crime in the vernacular. I know the Minister is a chartered accountant and a lawyer but I tell you that he ought to go back to law school and, if he does, tell us what a vernacular crime is really about.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Turner (Vancouver Quadra):** Now of course self-righteously he went on to say “there will be no discussion on this event until the investigation is finished”. There is no discussion anymore; they are going back into their foxholes.

What they really meant was that they would not comment once they got caught faking it as they clearly were faking it last week. The Prime Minister and the Government are now trying to get off the hook by suggesting that they did not call it a crime, that it was the reporter, Doug Small, who called it a crime. I have mentioned to Mr. Small personally that I would be delighted to take his case any time because there is absolutely no proof of criminal intent and no proof of a crime.

We will wait to see what comes out of this investigation. We will want to see what the RCMP report says about the incident. We will want to see what precautions were taken to protect the secrecy. We will want to see how the printing bureau was surveyed and how extensive were those precautions, because what the Minister of Finance fails to grasp is: crime or no crime it would not have happened if there had not have been negligence, negligence for which the Minister is responsible under parliamentary and constitutional traditions.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Turner (Vancouver Quadra)** Mr. Speaker, I repeat, the issue is not whether or not the Minister of Finance personally released information to the news media. Nobody accuses him of that. The issue is one of trust, placed in him as the custodian of the nation's finances,

placed in him by this Parliament, placed in him by Canadians because of his responsibility for the finances and accounting of our nation.

• (1510)

The Minister has missed the point. He has undermined our system, attempted to blame the Opposition and not accepted the responsibility for those for whom he is constitutionally responsible. It is for that reason we are currently talking and negotiating before your Honour about the breach of privileges of the representatives of the Canadian people. These privileges, in our submission to you, have been breached and violated. That case of privilege is not yet over. We intend to pursue it through you, Mr. Speaker, and we intend to get answers from this Government. Even more important, it is not just our privileges that have been breached and violated, but our fiduciary free privileges as representatives of the Canadian people.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Turner (Vancouver Quadra):** Every single Canadian has the right to feel confident and be understood. Every Canadian has the right to feel confident with the assurance that the tax he or she pays is revealed, supervised, challenged, controlled and spent in a fair manner by the Minister subject to the overall control of the House of Commons. If Budget secrecy does not apply to all Canadians then the system will not work.

I have read editorial comments. Some editorials argue, as did *The Financial Post* yesterday: “Budget secrecy is a tradition that has outlived its usefulness”. What that paper and what other newspapers editorially have failed to appreciate is that even though the general directions of some of the changes announced in the Budget may be known beforehand—even though I would encourage the Minister to consult widely, as I did when I held that office with the various sectors of the Canadian economy—the specific changes, the tax changes, the spending cuts, the amount of the deficit still have an impact on markets when they are announced. Prior knowledge of those specific changes can be used for personal profit, and so could the amount of the deficit in terms of movement on the world exchanges. We all know today, with the computer and instantaneous transmission of information, how quickly that information circulates not only across our own stock exchanges and money markets but instantaneously around the world.