

One would really expect the minister to have a little more shame, if at all, about venturing to suggest such a proposition. If the imposition of such a wide range of taxes as he announced last night is not a budget, I challenge him to tell me what it is. He would have us believe it is merely a statement of the financial condition of the country. I will have a reference from Beauchesne to refresh his memory in a moment.

If this government is allowed to get away with this trickery—it is now claiming the right to rule by diktat without recourse to Parliament—as I say, why not send us home? I have no doubt that that is what hon. members opposite would like to do. I think that is what the government in Ghana did when the opposition got a little obstreperous; it abolished the opposition. Hon. members opposite would like nothing more than to take that course.

Mr. MacEachen: You did not even face Parliament for four months.

Mr. Nielsen: That minister had 16 years in office.

Miss MacDonald: He was here with C. D. Howe.

Mr. Nielsen: I am reminded by my colleague that he was here with C.D. Howe and, if we want to compare ages in Parliament, he is getting a little long in the tooth. However, he and his government had sixteen years to do something about the economy, and now they are saying to us that we caused all this devastation in two parliamentary months. That is absolute, unadulterated rubbish.

Mr. Chenier: You are excellent in opposition.

Mr. Nielsen: To drag previous motions from previous Parliaments kicking and screaming into this one as an excuse for an invasion of the rights of Parliament would be invidious of any minister, but for a minister who is supposed to know Parliament and who is supposed to be an experienced parliamentarian, it is far too deliberate and too much a flouting of parliamentary rights to be passed over or tolerated. This government has now thrown aside the veil and revealed its absolute and utter disregard of the rights of Parliament and, indeed, of the parliamentary system, which certainly does not come as any news to most of us here.

The minister knows only too well that he cannot avail himself of the proceedings of a previous Parliament to justify his excesses and the excesses of his government in this one. Obviously he is still feeling a sense of guilt over the manner in which he brought his party to power by defeating a budget which would have been good and useful for this country. Now he is trying to have the best of both worlds in the process and is destroying Parliament's right to inquire and to criticize.

If there is any doubt about the nature of the document the minister read last night, I would like to refer him to page 174 of Beauchesne under the general heading of "Ways and Means", and I commend citation 514 to you, Madam Speaker, which reads as follows:

Privilege—Mr. W. Baker

The consideration of the financial statement made by the Minister of Finance is the most important business of Ways and Means.

Indeed, it is one of the most important purposes, if not primarily the most important purpose, of the business of this House.

This statement, familiarly known as "the Budget Speech", is made when the minister has completed his estimate of the probable income and expenditure for the financial year. In it, the Minister of Finance develops his views of the resources of the country, communicates his calculations of probable income and expenditure, and declares whether the burdens upon the people are to be increased or diminished. The economic aspect of this budget is important and taxes are imposed for their economic effects as well as for raising revenue to meet the expenditure for the year.

Then Beauchesne goes on in paragraph 517 and other succeeding paragraphs to describe the procedures normally followed when fulfilling that objective, an objective which the minister fulfilled in very small part last night. There is no way that the statement made by him last night can be considered anything but a budget, meagre as it was, according to all of the precedents. If the minister takes the trouble to read chapter 30—and I commend this to the honourable heckler over there who interjected a moment ago—

An hon. Member: Groucho Marx.

Mr. Nielsen: —of May's nineteenth edition at pages 775 through 783, he will find that there is no way that he can weasel out of the conclusion that his contribution to the throne speech debate last night was a budget.

He asks, "What is more important, Parliament or the people of Canada?" That is very typical of him and that crowd opposite. It is time he found out that the rights of Parliament are the rights of the people, and when the rights of Parliament are abrogated, flouted and trampled upon, the rights of the people are equally abrogated and flouted. Parliament is the people. The people send us here to debate the most important thing, which the minister and his government, by this devious device, are preventing us from debating.

The minister is attempting to take credit for bringing in a budget without undergoing the scrutiny which a budget ordinarily warrants and which is part of our parliamentary tradition. This is in keeping with the philosophy, according to the Auditor General, that Parliament has lost control over the public purse. The minister is determined in his conduct to continue that, and his gesture of defiance and the flouting of Parliament is intended to ensure not only that that control will not be reimposed, but also that whatever vestige of control remains in parliamentarians will be disposed of in this shabby and fraudulent fashion.

Madam Speaker, this motion should carry and, if it does not, indeed we might as well all go home. Because the whole purpose of Parliament will be thwarted, and intentionally so, by a government which has lost none of its arrogance and none of its concept of being in government by divine right forever.