

you would afford me the opportunity, as soon as possible this afternoon.

My question of privilege will be brief. It deals with the subject which I raised during question period concerning an advertisement prepared by Vickers and Benson Ltd. of Montreal and sent out to various newspapers across Canada for publication.

I am alleging that a breach of the privileges of members has occurred here in that at least Vickers and Benson, the employees thereof, and I do not know who else, were privy to information in the budget before members of this House had that information. That is a distinct breach of the privileges of the members of the House of Commons.

The information to which I refer is contained in the advertisement sent out by Vickers and Benson headed "Attention Home Owners". I think the first sentence says it all. It says: "Check if you are eligible"—

Madam Speaker: Order, please. I think I have a good idea of what the hon. member is trying to put before the House. I remind the hon. member that privilege is not at issue in this particular question. What is at issue is the matter of secrecy of the budget, which is not to be dealt with under privilege. Budget secrecy is merely a convention which the Chair is not in a position to enforce. I suggest that unless the hon. member has something new to raise, he and other hon. members have dealt properly with the matter by asking questions during question period.

I cannot deal with this question under privilege because the matter of secrecy of the budget is a convention which is not enforceable by the Chair. If the hon. member refers to cases in Great Britain, to which he has referred previously in this House, he will recognize with me that the matters were not discussed under privilege but were discussed under other headings and dealt with in the House through questions to ministers. The Chair has no authority whatsoever to enforce a convention.

Mr. Cossitt: Madam Speaker, I will leave the subject you said is taboo and proceed to the latter point I was going to make, which I think is a question of privilege. It was said in this House by the minister responsible for housing, and I will quote from *Hansard* because it reflects on all our privileges. On November 10, 1981, the minister said:

I do not know what will be in the budget on Thursday night.

Later he said:

—I do not know the contents of the budget affecting housing.

It is obvious from what happened in this House today that those are false statements. They are not accurate. The minister was either misleading this House due to incompetence, or intentionally misleading this House. If it was the latter, it is a very serious matter. I think it is certainly a question of privilege for me to raise at this time, that a minister gave this House information which obviously was not correct—

Madam Speaker: Order.

Privilege—Mr. Cossitt

Mr. Cossitt:—and therefore could have been lying to this House.

Madam Speaker: If the hon. member feels that the minister has intentionally misled this House, he has to say that in those words. The Chair cannot deal with a question in a hypothetical form. The hon. member said "if" the minister has intentionally misled this House, that is a serious matter. I would have to agree with the hon. member that it is a serious matter. We have to be sure that the hon. member is intending to say exactly that, that the minister has misled the House. I am afraid the hon. member is continuing to debate the question which I said does not come under the heading of "Privilege".

● (1510)

Mr. Cossitt: I rise on a point of order, Madam Speaker. I want to give notice, depending upon what the minister says tomorrow, that I reserve my right to move a question of privilege and to say that he has misled the House, if that is the case.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. Hon. members do not have to give notice to such things. If the hon. member feels tomorrow that he has a point to raise, then he can raise it. He does not have to give notice of his point. But if it is a question of privilege, then the hon. member knows that the usual statement and notice is required.

Hon. Erik Nielsen (Yukon): I rise to seek clarification from the Chair with respect to your ruling, Madam Speaker, on the first part of the question raised by the hon. member for Leeds-Grenville (Mr. Cossitt).

Do I understand correctly that the ruling of the Chair was, in effect, that it is not a breach of privilege of the members of this House if the government released budget information to Vickers and Benson before that information was released to members of this House, as it was, in the budget speech? Is that what the Chair is ruling?

Madam Speaker: No, I was not ruling on that point. I do not have the specifics as to whether or not something was released by the minister before the budget speech was made.

The hon. members are trying to elucidate whether there was a budget leak. I have had no such indication. I would not be the one who would judge whether there was a leak or not. I am saying that if hon. members are discussing a possible budget leak, it cannot be discussed under privilege. Budget leaks have to do with a convention which is not enforceable by the Chair.

Mr. Nielsen: That was the precise point I was seeking to clarify, may it please the Chair. It has always been my understanding of the practices of this House that when information, particularly budget information, is released prior to members of the House of Commons being informed of its contents, that in the past has constituted a very serious breach of members' privileges.

Half way through the Chair's response to my question seeking clarification, I was quite happy because you, Madam