

very important that we get this sorted out. The Minister of Finance can argue until he is blue in the face—Tory blue, in fact—

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Knowles:—that in the debate on the Address in Reply to the Speech from the Throne a member can speak about anything, so that includes him and he can make a speech about anything he wants.

An hon. Member: Or about nothing.

Mr. Knowles: He can also argue that under Standing Order 66(1) he can give notice of a ways and means motion any time in the House of Commons. He can argue that there have been times when we have avoided a general budget debate. But this is an unusual Parliament. It was elected after the previous government was here for just a short time. I will not go into the motives of the last two elections, except to say that most of us realize that both of them were elections in which people were voting against something. But this government has been elected with a majority although many people in the country do not have confidence in it. They have the majority of seats and they can stay here, if they hold their numbers, for four or five years. But it is terribly important for this government to establish the feeling that it is trying to be fair and that it has lost its old arrogance.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Knowles: Just before this session started, Madam Speaker, I became involved in one of those radio programs that abound around here, and I was asked how I thought the Liberals would perform. Being a generous soul who gives people the benefit of the doubt, I said, "Well, maybe they were chastised by those few months out of office and maybe they will not have their old arrogance."

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Knowles: I am sorry I said it, Madam Speaker, because that is what we are faced with now. It is a government which feels that because it has a majority, because it has the power, it can do things any way it wants to. As I said, the minister can argue from now until doomsday that he has the procedural right. But I do not think he had the moral or the parliamentary right to do something that went beyond what the House felt was the way to deal with budget measures.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Knowles: The very fact that we are having this discussion today means that there was some question about the way this government is going to run Parliament. I think that the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Clark), when he was prime minister, made a mistake when he said—as he did so often—he and his colleagues intended to govern as if they had a majority, which they did not have. I think that was part of the reason for his downfall. But, Madam Speaker, I think, what

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we have now is even worse. We have a government which, of course, has a majority but it is acting as though it owned the whole store, as though there were nobody else here and it could do what it wanted to do.

The Minister of Finance says that he made known to the Conservatives and to us—through me, in this case—what was planned. It is true that he spoke to me last week about his intention to speak last night. I asked him quite openly whether it was going to be a budget speech. He answered, "No, it is going to be a statement setting out what we are going to do with these two left-over budgets and what our general plans are". It was more of a procedural matter than it was a budget speech.

Some hon. Members: Shame.

Mr. Knowles: Yesterday, when it got around because of a press notice that it looked more like a budget speech, we had another conversation and I asked him again, "Will it be a mini-budget or will it just be a procedural matter?" I was even called by the CBC and asked my opinion, because apparently they were wrestling with the proposition that they might put the minister's speech on live last night. I said, "I think you are making a mistake, because the minister tells me it is not a mini-budget." Well, this is a matter of definition, and the minister still says it is not. I took his word for it, and I even argued with some of my colleagues and some of the press, saying, "Let us not get hot and bothered about this." But when I saw the document at seven o'clock and heard the minister read it at eight o'clock, I felt it went beyond the simple procedural explanation which the minister had indicated was going to be the nub of that budget.

I feel that that being the case, he should have had much more discussion with the representatives of the two parties on this side to see how to handle the matter. He did not want to bring in a budget—sometimes, I think, just like Donald Fleming in 1957 who did not want to bring in a budget—so he dragged it in this way. This minister is not ready to bring in a budget, but he felt there were certain financial matters he had to bring forward, and he brought them in this way. As I said, he can quote Standing Order 60, he can quote the rules and the precedents regarding the throne speech debate, and we will have a hard time persuading Your Honour that you have to rule that what he did is out of order. But it is not good for the life of this Parliament and for the confidence of the people of this country—

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Knowles:—if we get the feeling that the government is just going to run things the way it wants. I contend, Madam Speaker, that this government, with its majority, should be more careful and more sensitive about the opposition than the minority government had to be last time. They took their life in their hands, and we know what happened. But we are here now for three, four or five years and it is terribly important for the country to get the impression that this Parliament is