

When we look at the precedents, Mr. Speaker, we see that at no time in British parliamentary history has there been a situation where we had a deliberate theft of a Budget document that was subsequently handed to a third party.

Mr. Speaker, today you are being asked to condemn the Minister of Finance for something over which he had absolutely no control. In Québec, and Manitoba, in Saint-Boniface and Carleton Place and Bellechasse, Canadians are not about to accept the Opposition's proposal that the Minister of Finance be held responsible for a criminal offence committed by someone else. That is taking the principle of ministerial responsibility to unprecedented levels. If we want to show Canadians that one can serve the public honourably and if we want young Canadians to come and work here as Members in this House, we cannot burden reasonable people with absolutely unreasonable and unrealistic standards. That is what they are asking you to do, Mr. Speaker, and I know that, in your wisdom, you will want to consider this argument.

This morning when I heard—

An Hon. Member: Oh, oh!

Mr. Valcourt: You really make me sick!

When we heard the Leader of the Opposition harshly criticize the Minister of Finance and ask for his resignation because the Budget was not tabled in the House—

Mr. Speaker, the Budget will be officially tabled in the House at five o'clock this afternoon, but Canadians have already seen it. Those who revel in being the people's representatives will have an opportunity to vote on this Budget because it will be debated in the House, and every one of us will be able to discuss it. I would encourage you, in the interest of Canada, to vote in favor, even the Hon. Member for LaSalle-Émard (Mr. Martin). The Hon. Member for LaSalle is dead—I mean even the Hon. Member for LaSalle-Émard can vote in favor of the Budget.

In fact, the rights of the Hon. Members are not affected at all and despite the vast experience of our colleagues opposite, they will realize in the days to come that they have an opportunity to discuss the Budget. There will be a debate on the Budget and its contents will be analyzed. Canadians will witness all this and, at the end of the budgetary process, you will vote on the

Privilege—Mr. Valcourt

Budget which I have read, Mr. Speaker, and which happens to be fair, equitable and responsible.

While in my constituency of Madawaska-Victoria last weekend, I talked with some citizens about the upcoming Budget and they were speculating on all kinds of measures that could be in it. But all of them agreed, as do all Canadians, that our financial and economic situation is such that the Government must take important and responsible measures to protect the pension plan for our senior citizens, the family allowances program for our needy children, as well as the health insurance system, and they do not want to lose the Minister of Finance (Mr. Wilson).

When we see in the Budget, for example, that Atlantic Canada will benefit from a 35 per cent increase in regional development funds in the next five years—Canadians will not want to criticize the Minister of Finance for that.

Mr. Boudria: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order! The Hon. Member from Glengarry—Prescott—Russell (Mr. Boudria) on a point of order.

Mr. Don Boudria (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell): **Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order.**

I think all Members as well as the Speaker have to be patient today when hearing the question of privilege to which all Members have to contribute. I think all Members want to hear everyone's contribution, even if it means granting a little more leeway than might normally be the case. That's one thing but to discuss the so-called strong points of the Budget that's going a bit too far.

We on this side of the House have not discussed its weak points. We have talked about the question of privilege, namely whether the budget should or should not be "heard", whether the Minister should or should not stay on as Minister and whether this Budget which the Minister intends to table should be called a Budget. But we have not discussed the substance of the document!

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I would ask the Hon. Minister to stick to the question of privilege.

Mr. Valcourt: Mr. Speaker, how did they put it? To justify their position, they spoke about a non-Budget, a non-Minister, a non-leader, a non-event—