

*Privilege—Mr. Nielsen*

Party. I simply address myself to the very narrow point that you have raised, Madam Speaker, in terms of the question of privilege raised by the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Nielsen), and as to whether or not, within our precedents and tradition, you can on the basis of the prima facie evidence which is clearly and irrefutably before you present the motion which has been suggested by the Leader of the Opposition.

I do not think there is any question that the Minister of Finance (Mr. Lalonde) should resign. On February 18, 1983 the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) himself, when dealing with the so-called "Coalgate" or Gillespie matter, left no question in the minds of Canadians and Members of the House of Commons when he said as reported at page 22978 of *Hansard*:

Madam Speaker, the Hon. Member makes a parallel with former Chancellor of the Exchequer, Dalton, who inadvertently let out a budget secret. That secret hit the newspaper headlines before the Minister had read his budget. This, according to the tradition, is something that you should not do, and therefore the Minister chose to resign.

The Prime Minister himself acknowledges that. So I expect that there will be a resignation. But the question before us is not whether or not the Minister should resign, but indeed whether or not the privileges of this House have in fact been impinged upon, to the degree that the ability of Members of Parliament to deal with the business before the House has been compromised. I suggest to you, Madam Speaker, on very compelling evidence, that that is precisely what we face here today.

We do have precedents in our own House. I would like to refer to the case of privilege that arose in 1975 concerning the Hon. Member for Kenora-Rainy River (Mr. Reid) which was alluded to by the Right Hon. Member for Yellowhead (Mr. Clark). You will recall the circumstances were that the Hon. Member for Kenora-Rainy River, as a Parliamentary Secretary, was alleged to have, prior to the presentation of the budget, revealed certain contents of that budget as it related to customs and excise—

**Mr. McGrath:** Pleasure craft.

**Mr. Crombie:** Outboard motors.

**Mr. McGrath:** To an operator in his constituency.

**Mr. Hnatyshyn:** Pleasure craft and outboard motor duties. I appreciate the assistance I am getting from my hon. friends here who have given details in a way that I could not of that particular case. I simply say, Madam Speaker, that in that particular instance your predecessor, Mr. Speaker Jerome, indicated there was no question that that in itself constituted a prima facie breach of privilege, though it was a mere allegation of a breach of budget confidentiality and secrecy.

I start with that premise because I would like to translate that now to the present circumstances. We now have the Minister of Finance who, it is alleged on very compelling evidence, has partially revealed the contents of the budget.

These are not incidental matters and I do not for a moment accept the proposition of the Government House Leader that because it did not deal with matters relating precisely to

taxation, somehow that has any effect on us at all. I agree with the Government House Leader when he says these circumstances are not the same as in the Dalton case. This is far more serious.

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

**Mr. Hnatyshyn:** There is the potential for a far greater profit to be made by those people who are involved in the bond market of this country. People in the bond market operate on the basis of buying and investing and, indeed, on selling on a margin basis. They do not put up the full amount of money. It is quite possible, on the basis of a 5 per cent investment for people who can see whether the budget is going to be a bullish or bearish budget, to take a signal from that information and make enormous amounts of money. That is one of the reasons it is important to this House that information of that type not be released prior to the budget.

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

**Mr. Hnatyshyn:** The Minister of Finance has disclosed willy-nilly the contents of the budget. The Government House Leader asks how we can decide this now since we have not yet heard the budget. The very simple reason, Madam Speaker, is this. It is a tradition of this House that if the content of the budget was not disclosed on television last night and today, the Minister of Finance could, by standing in his place in this House, tell us that that was not part of the budget. That would end the whole debate because we would be obliged by the traditions of this House to accept his word.

Second, he has not denied it outside the House, which brings me to the question of whether or not we are being compromised in terms of our ability to carry on the business of this House.

The budget is a document that must be presented on the floor of the House of Commons, not by virtue of some crazy tradition or because it is a convenient way to deal with things, but because that is the only way in which there can be order in the economic law-making process of this country. If, for example—and this is very important—we are to accept the proposition that the Minister either inadvertently or consciously is able outside the House of Commons to present the budget, that acknowledgement alone would render the House of Commons impotent. It would mean there would be no need for us to come here at all. If the Minister could make his budget presentation outside the House, there would be no need for him to present it to Members of the House of Commons. There would be no opportunity for Members to debate the matter. If you say he can do this in circumstances which are inadvertent, then it is logical to conclude that it is quite possible for the Minister deliberately to make a statement outside the House.

I suggest to you, Madam Speaker, that whether or not the privileges of this House have been affected is a very crucial question. If we are not able to deal with budgetary matters in this House, then I say that that is fundamentally wrong.