

The Budget

Mr. Dick: Do you know who?

Mr. Riis: We were aware at that time that at least one of the networks was going to go public with it and that there was at least two people in the country who had detailed information, perhaps many, many more. Knowing that, the Prime Minister decided to surge ahead and try to ram this Budget through.

We are at a difficult point. For the entire day we have been arguing the question before the House whether the budgetary process is consistent with the traditions and long-standing practices of the House. That is what we have been arguing all day. We have been hearing from Members on both sides whether this process is acceptable.

Mr. Speaker, you are asking us now, before that debate is concluded, before any decision of the House has been taken, to proceed to a special motion before us which anticipates a decision by this House that would say that what the Government is doing is acceptable. We have not come to that conclusion.

The arguments are being put forward, as of 10 minutes ago, yet you are asking us to make a decision now. I suspect you are in a position to have to make a decision whether or not this anticipation of a decision is appropriate.

New Democrats have held that the Minister of Finance ought to have resigned, that the Budget, as it was presented in the press conference last night, ought to have been cancelled and a proper one introduced at an appropriate time. For that reason, on behalf of my Party, I have no other choice but to withdraw our support for proceeding with this special motion at this time.

Mr. Lewis: Mr. Speaker, my friends opposite make the point that at the time unanimous consent was given they expected that the Budget events would unfold in the normal way. We all did. There is no question about that.

The motion states that for the purpose of the Budget statement of the Minister of Finance certain things shall take place. A Budget document was made public in another forum. National television, it is true.

I guess the question is whether Members of Parliament or the House of Commons are going to be held hostage to the actions of a thief.

Mr. Turner (Vancouver Quadra): Oh, come on!

Mr. Lewis: That is the question.

Mr. Turner (Vancouver Quadra): That is not the question at all.

Mr. Lewis: The House came to a decision as to an appropriate order of events for today. The House took that decision. That is our position.

We feel that the decision of the House last Wednesday was a valid decision and should go forward and should stand.

I want to make reference to my hon. friend, the Hon. Member for Ottawa—Vanier (Mr. Gauthier), who I have known for some time and respect. I think there are comments made from time to time in the heat of this place. I know I have made them myself. I regret those comments. I have had a lot of things said about me, but I do not think my honour has been questioned. I will say to you that I take them in the heat of battle and I will not remember them tomorrow because I know my friend to be an honourable person. I know he fights hard and well for his Party and I think they were made in the heat of the battle.

Last night at 5.45 my duty as the Government House Leader was to preserve our options if in fact there was an authenticated, substantiated, corroborated Budget leak. I say to you that the gentleman, Mr. Small, who brought this Budget leak to the attention of the Canadian public, did not authenticate it, did not substantiate it until he had it in his hand at seven o'clock. So at quarter to six I took the action I could. I suggest to you that the only option was to move under Standing Order 26(1) to preserve our options. Therefore I moved it. I say to you Mr. Speaker, with all due respect, that I believe the House Order duly voted upon, unanimous consent by the House, stands and is valid, and I suggest that after you have had an opportunity to consider the matter you might wish to reserve. We are in your hands.

• (1710)

The Hon. Minister of Finance should proceed in the event that your ruling is favourable.

Mr. Speaker: I do not need to remind Hon. Members that we are having an unusual day.