

Privilege—Mr. W. Baker

Perhaps I should obtain unanimous consent of the committee before the hon. gentleman carries on. Is it agreed that he should be allowed to be at variance with the rules as to relevancy in section (2) of Standing Order 59?

The record continues:

MR. LEBOE: I think it should apply to all members.

THE CHAIRMAN: Unanimous consent is given on condition that it will apply equally to the leaders of all other parties in the House.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

THE CHAIRMAN: In addition, it is agreed that those other leaders of the House shall be permitted an extension of time, as will the minister, to permit them to complete their remarks on this resolution in a general way.

The present finance minister was also very prominent in that debate. I quote him from page 855, when the rules were quite different but what was being attempted was quite similar. He said at that time as a member sitting in opposition:

I should like to say a word on the point of order you have raised, Mr. Chairman, in awareness of the fact that your point was not raised with respect to relevancy. We decided when this debate began that it would be a general debate equivalent to a budget debate during which a wide range of matters could be brought before the committee. If you had raised a point of order in connection with the relevancy of the remarks of the hon. member, then I think we would have occasion to attempt to define the limits of the consent which we gave on Monday. But I understand that your comments are on an entirely different level, namely, you wish to secure from the committee an expression of opinion as to whether at this time, in view of the international crisis, it was proper or in good taste or in the interests of Canada to discuss a matter which has some sensitivity.

The distinction which emerges from that debate and which distinguishes it and the 1957 precedent, I suggest to the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre, is that the debate then took place on a debatable ways and means motion. There was unanimous consent given for a general debate and we spent eight or nine days on the resolution; and it affected—another distinction—only the provisions of the Income Tax Act as opposed to what is being attempted here.

The distinction which was pointed out to you, Madam Speaker, with respect to those objections in 1962 is principally that we must remember that the House was able under the rules in force at that time to debate a ways and means motion at great length with no limitations imposed by the rules. On that occasion unanimous consent was given to allow the debate to be a general economic one, and the House was debating only one type of ways and means motion, namely, one to amend the Income Tax Act. But that is not what is being attempted here. The Minister of Finance said in the last paragraph of his notice to the parliamentary press gallery, which I presume was distributed some time yesterday, announcing that there would be a lock-up: "There will be no formal official briefing"—and this is the important phrase—"inasmuch as no new measures will be involved." That, I suggest to the Minister of Finance, is a grossly false statement in view of what was contained in that statement last night, which did involve new measures.

The hon. gentleman wants, in response to my hon. friend for St. John's West, to impress us with this great opportunity which still remains for debate of his statement. He says there is an amendment and that the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Clark) or anyone else who has spoken may speak again. That amendment is to be disposed of tonight, but in addition to that they are adjourning the throne speech debate and he is galliv-

anting off to Germany for the week. What kind of opportunity does that afford hon. members to criticize that mini-budget of his delivered last night? I suggest, none.

Through the device of introducing what is what I call a vest-pocket budget during this throne speech debate, the minister, like the Artful Dodger, has artfully evaded the possibility of a structured, organized opposition attack on his budget, which in effect is what it was. He has brought it in by the back door. He has brought in by the back door what he dare not do by the front and has cut off parliamentary debate in the process.

We have come to expect that kind of high-handed action, that abuse of parliamentary privilege by the same old bunch which sits over there once again. He has, in effect, imposed this government's view of the economy on the nation by fraud and by deceit. In so doing he has shown that this government's view of the economy consists of an intellectual vacuum. He has been obliged to borrow, resurrect, reinstate the economic views of his predecessors in borrowing liberally—and I underscore that word—from the budget which he and his party defeated with their collaborators in the NDP simply because they thirsted for power; and it ill behoves us to hear the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre, speaking on behalf of his members, whining and complaining after participating and collaborating in the action which brought those rascals back to the other side of the House. The minister has shown by his conduct last night that he has learned nothing and forgotten everything.

What he has done is at the very least a breach of order, and at the very worst a breach of privilege; and many guise it is a surreptitious invasion of the right of this House to examine and criticize fiscal expenditures. This is another step in the erosion of parliamentary control, another example of the contempt in which that group holds parliamentarians.

● (1440)

We have had the example of their twinning. They do not need opposition members. They are going to set up a structure of their own which would replace the representative system here in Parliament, so why listen to us? Why have any debates at all on any matter? There was a mere casual announcement of financial policy without even fulfilling the parliamentary requirement of notice, and I draw that to the attention of the minister as being a further distinction between all of the past precedents and what he is attempting to do now.

This is nothing other than a definite imposition of new taxes through a ways and means motion. If these are not budgetary measures, what are they? The minister tries to take refuge in the fact that he is picking up these measures by the device of trying to convince us that they were already tabled in the last Parliament, and that somehow they are still living and breathing ways and means motions. He knows better than that. He knows that with the death of that budget last December the resolutions which were tabled at that time and, indeed, everything else on the order paper died, and died with that Parliament.