

question of privilege should have flowed through. In those days the House commenced proceedings at two o'clock. Under the new Standing Orders, these days the House begins at eleven o'clock. You quite properly recognized the question of privilege at eleven o'clock and gave it the importance it deserved under Standing Order 20(1), which reads as follows:

Whenever any matter of privilege arises, it shall be taken into consideration immediately.

We were a little upset that the precedent set in 1975 was not followed. We felt that the argument should have been allowed to carry through with continuity.

Be that as it may, I support the argument of my colleague the Hon. Member for Calgary Centre (Mr. Andre) that the privileges of all Members of the House have been breached in that we read about and saw on television matters which were obviously in the budget which will be presented tonight. It is a breach of our privileges as Members that this material was disseminated through the media before it was presented to the House. The effect on the market, the effect on what action private citizens will take, has yet to be seen. The question of whether or not the Prime Minister will stand on tradition has yet to be known.

I would argue from a different point of view that every Member of Parliament has confidentiality, has privilege as set forth in Citation 16 of Beauchesne, which reads as follows:

Parliamentary privilege is the sum of the peculiar rights enjoyed by each House collectively as a constituent part of the High Court of Parliament, and by Members of each House individually, without which they could not discharge their functions and which exceed those possessed by other bodies or individuals.

I would submit to you that the Minister of Finance (Mr. Lalonde) has a privilege and a right; that privilege and that right is to have matters which he considers to be confidential kept confidential.

The question is whether the Minister of Finance let slip information which is in the budget deliberately or accidentally. If it was deliberate, it is a breach of the Minister's oath of office; if it was accidental, the disclosure of that in the media is a breach of the Minister's confidentiality, his privilege.

We would argue that in either case, whether you take the argument of the Hon. Member for Calgary Centre or my argument, the privileges of a Member or Members of the House have been breached. It is a matter of sufficient importance that we, as her Majesty's Loyal Opposition, and that Members of the New Democratic Party, concentrated the entire Question Period on it. You will know that does not always happen. I suggest to you that the fact that Members from all across the country representing the Opposition saw this as being of sufficient importance to devote the entire Question Period to it, lends weight to the argument that there has been a breach of the privileges of Members of the House.

If you find there has been a breach of privilege, we would move:

That a Special Committee be appointed to inquire into all the circumstances relating to or associated with the disclosure of budget information by the Minister of Finance on Monday, April 18, 1983, that the Committee consist of

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eleven Members of the House, and that the Committee have power to send for persons, papers and records.

Madam Speaker: I think I have heard a sufficient number of interventions on this particular matter. Hon. Members will understand that I obviously want to take some time to examine all the arguments that have been put forward.

I want to tell the House that I will rule on this question a little before the adjournment of the House. May I add that I will rule whether the Minister of Finance is present or not. Obviously it will be necessary to rule on the question today.

I am sorry, my English has played tricks on me. I did not mean adjournment. We are going to be back in the House at eight o'clock. I meant that I would rule just before we rise at six o'clock.

Mr. Lewis: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. In view of the importance of this matter, would it be possible that I, as House Leader of the Official Opposition, and the House Leader of the New Democratic Party, have notice of your ruling so that we will be sure to be in the House?

Madam Speaker: Yes, I can do that. I will give notice to Leaders of the different Parties.

Hon. Erik Nielsen (Leader of the Opposition): Madam Speaker, there are circumstances which you may or may not be aware of which may very well tend to compromise the Chair in the decision it is about to make. I do not know whether you are aware that the arrangements for a lockup were made by the Minister of Finance (Mr. Lalonde) to occur at 4:30 o'clock today. As a result of a question of privilege we raised this morning, the word now from the Minister of Finance to the media and ourselves is that the lockup will not occur until such time as the Speaker rules on the question of privilege.

● (1520)

Now, there are two points. I am speaking of compromising the Chair, Madam Speaker. There are two points, before you shake your head in the negative, finally ruling out the possibility that the two points I have to make might be valid. There are two points that have to be made here. We have had a clear indication from the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) today in a Question Period which might be taken as having let them off the hook, as it were, by explanations that were allowed by the Chair over my objections of the moment—

Mr. Dionne (Northumberland-Miramichi): Get on with it.

Mr. Nielsen: If "Disco Duck" would stop interjecting and listen to what I am saying—

Mr. Dionne (Northumberland-Miramichi): Why don't you stop and get on with the business of the House?

Mr. Nielsen: We are very much on the business of the House. One of the points, Madam Speaker, is that obviously, as indicated by the Prime Minister, changes are being made to