

budget making and the documentation that was in preparation for budgets, the confidentiality of that information, the kind of security that had to be enforced in the Department of Finance, for example, and other Departments, and the kinds of problems raised with lock-ups for the press, Members of the Opposition and Members on the Government side who might be critics or vitally interested in commenting immediately upon presentation of a budget. Along with some other matters, those difficulties led to the introduction of a green paper by the former Minister of Finance, now Secretary of State for External Affairs (Mr. MacEachen), on how we might open up the whole budget process.

I agree with the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance that this motion is totally unnecessary. There is no reason for us to refer to any committee of the House the question of budget secrecy or whether or not there was a budget leak, which should lead to an inquiry by the House, by the current Minister of Finance (Mr. Lalonde) at the time of the last budget. It is clear from all the commentary my colleague brought forth that there was not such a leak. Leaks of that nature have never led to serious concern by Ministers of Finance. I agree entirely with my colleague as to the kind of matters that should give rise to concern.

If the Minister of Finance had made reference to a matter in some way that got out to the public which related to a tax matter or expenditure matter whereby the individual who received that information could obtain personal gain as a result of that information at the expense of the public or at the expense of a small group of taxpayers, then the Minister had made a fundamental error which would require his resignation. However, that was obviously not the case, as my colleague pointed out quite clearly.

With regard to the other matters the inquiry might consider such as the question of budget secrecy as opposed to this specific incident, I think they have been looked at very carefully in other forums. The Special Committee on Standing Orders and Procedure certainly looked at that matter. The Finance Committee looked at that matter in relation to the green paper. We have had a new opening up of the procedures in budgets. Ways and Means motions are now as a matter of course referred to the Standing Committee on Finance, Trade and Economic Affairs. We go over Ways and Means motions prior to the introduction of legislation which is to be considered by the House. This facilitates the process and involves individual Members in the committee process, and the bringing in of witnesses to look at matters of taxation prior to the consideration by Committee of the Whole, which is the way tax matters are considered.

We have made great strides. We have undertaken the kinds of issues this motion asks be undertaken by a special inquiry. Therefore, there is no need for a special inquiry. If the special inquiry to which the Hon. Member for Yukon is referring is in any way to be a witch-hunt, and I do not believe that it is, there are no grounds upon which the hunt for witches can be pursued, as my friend from Mississauga North showed so clearly in his earlier remarks.

House of Commons Act

I understand you are about to rise, Mr. Speaker, to indicate that my time has expired.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Blaker): The Parliamentary Secretary is correct. Pursuant to Standing Order 24(2), it is my duty to interrupt the proceedings because the hour for that section of Private Members' business has now expired.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BILLS

[English]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Blaker): Shall all orders listed under Private Members' Public Bills preceding Order No. 487 be allowed to stand by unanimous consent?

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

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[Translation]

HOUSE OF COMMONS ACT (INTERNAL ECONOMY)

MEASURE TO AMEND

Mr. Gérald Laniel (Beauharnois-Salaberry) moved that Bill C-687, to amend the House of Commons Act (internal economy), be read the second time and referred to the Standing Committee on Management and Members' Services.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased with this opportunity to speak to Bill C-687, an Act to amend the House of Commons Act (internal economy), which was given first reading on June 14, 1983 in this House. At the time, I commented as follows: "The purpose of this Bill is to increase the autonomy of the House of Commons with respect to its internal administration. It defines the Executive of the Commissioners of Internal Economy which the present Act does not do, and provides for the appointment of two more Members as Commissioners, to be chosen from among the backbenchers, one from each side of the House, to increase the involvement of the House in its own administration."

The whole question of internal economy and involvement of backbenchers (by delegation) in decisions affecting the administration of the House of Commons has been debated several times on the floor of the House in recent years, but I can assure you, Mr. Speaker, that it is still a matter of concern for most Members.

On October 30, 1969, our former colleague, Mr. Frank Howard, the then Member for Skeena, introduced Bill C-32 which was debated on February 24, 1970 and whose purpose was to abolish the rights of Privy Council Members regarding the internal economy of the House by simply repealing sections 16 and 18 of the House of Commons Act.