

*Privilege—Mr. Clark*

Commons that there had, in fact, been the kind of publication of details that later became clear. We did not know that. We knew that there was a possibility and that possibility meant that it was prudent for us to ask for the House of Commons to stay in a position where it would be possible for Parliament to receive a Budget early if that were necessary.

**Ms. Copps:** Come on.

**Mr. Clark (Yellowhead):** That was the simple act of prudence taken at that time.

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

**Mr. Clark (Yellowhead):** Just as it would have been irresponsible for Global Television to have suggested more in their broadcast than they knew, so would it have been irresponsible for this Government to have suggested that there was a substantial publication of Budget information—

**Mr. Marchi:** What is wrong with honesty?

**Mr. Clark (Yellowhead):**—before we knew that there had, in fact, been that kind of substantial publication of Government information.

It was prudence that led the House Leader to seek agreement to have the House continue in case there was something more serious. It is simply false to argue that the Government knew of the nature of this theft before the House rose yesterday.

In any event, Opposition Parties denied the House of Commons the opportunity to extend its hours. When the document was seen on television around 7 p.m., it became clear that we were dealing with something more than a reporter's speculation because the journalist in question, Mr. Small, held up for the first time a document—

**Mr. Lapierre:** Did Wilson need that to recognize his own Budget?

**Mr. Clark (Yellowhead):**—which was clearly a document that bore the logo of the Budget and added the extreme likelihood that there had, in fact, been the entry into the public domain of a budgetary document.

A budget document had evidently been stolen. There it was.

**Ms. Copps:** How do you know it was stolen?

**Mr. Clark (Yellowhead):** It had not been released by the Government. It had not become available through the work of a Minister or anyone else.

**Ms. Copps:** Do you know who stole it?

**Mr. Clark (Yellowhead):** But it was there in the public domain on television. It was quoted. That raised the possibility that somebody might take advantage of that information.

I think this is an important part of the debate, Mr. Speaker, because there has been some suggestion here in the House, I take it a serious suggestion, intently felt, that there was a possibility of abuse since this information was available in the public domain before it had been tabled in the normal way. We were concerned about that. It was precisely that concern that there may be some kind of abuse that caused us to act as quickly as we could to regularize the situation, and we did two things. First, we immediately launched an investigation so we would find out what it was that occurred. As my colleague the Solicitor General (Mr. Blais) said earlier in question period today, not only was there an RCMP investigation but also precautions have been taken with various security commissions across the country, and that activity is proceeding.

In addition, we knew there was a danger that would grow if there was information available over Global Television that had not been formally presented to Parliament. What we wanted to do was close that gap. We wanted to recognize that a theft had occurred, that a document was in the public domain, that something had to be done to ensure that we limited the range of abuse. What did we do?

**Mr. Kaplan:** You should have scrapped the Budget.

**Mr. Clark (Yellowhead):** The House was not sitting. We needed some way in which to put this document, this Budget, in the possession of the House of Commons. It was urgent to act quickly for two reasons. First, to prevent abuses. Second, to respect the rights of Parliament.

**Mr. Lapierre:** It was urgent at five o'clock.

**Mr. Clark (Yellowhead):** The question was how could the House of Commons meet quickly?

**Mr. Lapierre:** You call the Speaker.

**Mr. Clark (Yellowhead):** The Opposition Parties in a quite extraordinary abandonment of their responsibility today has suggested that that question of referring the matter to the House of Commons was the sole responsibility of yourself, sir. It was the sole responsibility of the Speaker.