

*Oral Questions*

In view of the fact that such advance information as to what is to be in the budget could have repercussions on the stock market, could permit some people to make huge sums of money and throw things into a bit of a tizzy, will the Minister of Finance declare categorically that the story in this morning's *The Globe and Mail* is incorrect, that this is not a forecast of his budget of Tuesday night?

**Hon. Allan J. MacEachen (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance):** As the hon. member knows, Madam Speaker, prior to every budget there are speculative stories relating to the budget. That happened last December when there were innumerable stories as to what would be in the budget. That has happened on this occasion. I have a long list of newspaper articles containing speculation as to what may or may not be in the budget. That is a normal process and it does not require the Minister of Finance either to confirm or deny the rich, often erroneous, speculation that occurs.

**Mr. Knowles:** Madam Speaker, in view of the fact that this story lists seriatim at least 15 specific points in very precise terms and very precise detail, will the minister keep this in mind when he brings down his budget and, if there has been a leak, will he take steps to find out how that came about?

**Mr. MacEachen:** Madam Speaker, we will not be able to deal with that possibility until after the budget has been delivered. Obviously at that time if there appears to have been any leak, which is a matter quite apart from speculation, action will be taken. However, because the speculation is so diversified and wide-ranging in all newspapers—there is not just the article by Mr. Carruthers; there is a variety of others—it would be difficult for the speculation, in some cases at least, not to be right—for example, the date of the budget.

**Mr. Knowles:** Madam Speaker, in view of the fact that one of the most important items in Mr. Carruthers' story is to the effect that there is to be an export tax on natural gas and electricity, and in view of the serious nature of this, will the minister deny categorically that he has any intention of imposing such a tax—

**An hon. Member:** You want to know what is in the budget.

**Mr. Knowles:** I want the minister to deny that there is a budget leak—particularly when it is in the minister's power, by increasing taxes on the multinationals, which have had a 65 per cent increase in their profits in the last nine months, to get the funds he needs without the offensive tax which Mr. Carruthers says the minister is going to produce?

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

**Mr. MacEachen:** Madam Speaker, the same question was raised recently at the meeting of ministers of finance when a number of ministers asked me to forswear at that point the possibility of an export tax. What I will say today is what I told them, namely that it is an option that is available to the Minister of Finance, that it is fully within the constitutional

authority of the Government of Canada to levy such a tax, and it is an option which is being considered at the present time.

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## STANDING ORDERS

S.O. 33—REQUEST FOR REFERENCE TO STANDING COMMITTEE

**Mr. Bob Wenman (Fraser Valley West):** Madam Speaker, in order that the rights of private members on both sides of this House will not be further offended, and in view of the fact that Standing Order 33 effectively restricts the freedom of speech of duly elected members of Parliament, will the government take steps to remove or to modify the rule by referring it to the Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections?

● (1140)

[Translation]

**Hon. Yvon Pinard (President of the Privy Council):** Madam Speaker, the suggestion made by the hon. member concerns 1/116 of the kind of reform we would welcome in this institution, because the Standing Orders of this House contain 116 items. On the other hand, I have a suggestion to make. Standing Orders 75A, 75B and 75C when applied are termed as closure by the opposition, but they are really used to limit the debate and to extend it more than a full day if we wish. The hon. member knows full well that these Standing Orders cannot apply to a motion, only to a bill, because they only concern the different stages of a bill. So I suggest it would be a positive step—and I am open to this suggestion if the hon. member wants to make it—to include in Standing Orders 75A, 75B and 75C motions as well as bills. This would have enabled us in this case to allow more than a full day while restricting the debate at this first stage of the constitutional issue. So, according to his suggestion, Madam Speaker, if, on the one hand, we are quite open to parliamentary reform, and I want to indicate to my colleagues that something is forthcoming in this regard, it would also be advisable to consider applying the provisions of Standing Orders 75A, 75B and 75C to a motion in addition to a bill.

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[English]

## THE CONSTITUTION

REQUEST FOR ASSURANCE CLOSURE WILL NOT BE REINVOKED

**Mr. Bob Wenman (Fraser Valley West):** Madam Speaker, of course I would welcome any move toward parliamentary reform, and I thank the minister for agreeing to consider such an initiative.

**An hon. Member:** And respect.

**Mr. Wenman:** I respect Parliament, my friend, and I hope you do the same.

**Some hon. Members:** Oh, oh!

**Mr. Wenman:** In his press conference yesterday the Prime Minister hinted at the use of closure to limit debate on further stages of this proposal or motion which will be returned to the House. Can the Deputy Prime Minister assure this House that the Prime Minister and the Government of Canada will not, during the forthcoming procedures, invoke closure again? In fact, closure should not be invoked until the parliamentary reform suggested by his colleague is completed. Can he give us the assurance that all members will have the right to speak and that closure will not be invoked in further stages?

**Hon. Allan J. MacEachen (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance):** Madam Speaker, the hon. member knows as well as I do that the rule invoked yesterday is a part of the procedure of the House of Commons.

**Mr. Knowles:** Brought in by the Tories in 1913.

**Mr. MacEachen:** The hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre has properly reminded us that the closure rule was brought in by the Conservative party.

**Mr. Crombie:** Not for the constitution.

**Mr. MacEachen:** I remember also that Mr. Diefenbaker, before he became prime minister, stated that he would abolish the closure rule, but during his period as prime minister he forgot all about it.

**Mr. Clark:** He never used it.

**Mr. MacEachen:** He left the closure rule on the books, and when the present House leader for the Conservative party brought in his paper on parliamentary change, to my recollection he did not include any indication of abolishing closure.

#### EXPRESSION OF VIEWS OF MEMBERS BEFORE JOINT COMMITTEE

**Mr. Chris Speyer (Cambridge):** Madam Speaker, my question is addressed to the President of the Privy Council. In view of the fact that the parliamentary committee which is to be established will consist of a relatively small number of members, probably five or six from our party and two from the New Democratic Party, and in light of last night's closure when 200 members were denied the right to speak about the fundamental arrangements which govern this country, would the minister please advise this House as to how these members are to make their views known to the committee so that the committee will have the advantage of knowing those views when reporting to this House? In particular, is any consideration being given whereby members have to ask to be witnesses before a committee of Parliament?

[*Translation*]

**Hon. Yvon Pinard (President of the Privy Council):** Madam Speaker, those are questions which could be easily answered by the parliamentary leader of my hon. colleague. However, I am pleased to remind him that, with the assistance

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of the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre I suggested to his party to sit longer hours when there would be no Liberal speakers and when we would have only Progressive Conservative speakers to participate in the debate, and that his own caucus rejected that offer.

We mentioned earlier through the Deputy Prime Minister that we were prepared during the third stage, once the committee has reported to the House, to discuss an extension of the debate hours and also an extension of the days for the debate on that matter. So we are prepared to negotiate all those questions, and to give more time to all hon. members who want to participate but we want the opposition to prove its good faith by accepting at least the reasonable offers we made them.

[*English*]

**Mr. Speyer:** Madam Speaker, the conduct of the government with respect to this debate has entrenched bitterness, it has not entrenched rights.

My supplementary question is to the same minister, and it pertains to the constitution, which is the public social contract which underpins the terms on which Canadians live together. Does the minister not believe that this basic arrangement, which keeps people living together in a state hopefully of harmony, deserves a maximum amount of scrutiny, certainly more than the Bank Act or any other bill which comes before the House? Why have we not been given an opportunity to debate fully the constitution of our country?

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Pinard:** Madam Speaker, may I remind the hon. member that it was his own leader who urged us not to deal with this very important question but rather with economic matters when Parliament resumed? We thought that this institution was capable of working on more than one important matter at a time. We also thought this institution was capable of showing the Canadian public that, through its committees, it could tackle concurrently constitutional, economic and energy issues.

So if some members of the opposition want to show the Canadian people it is possible to paralyse Parliament, they may succeed temporarily but I can guarantee that over the long term common sense will prevail and the public will realize that Parliament can function, can face the realities of the eighties, and also that we have the power and the capacity to cope with important issues such as the constitution, the economy, energy and all others to which he referred. All that is required for the House to function really well and for each member to enjoy complete freedom of expression is a little co-operation and good faith.