

The Budget

joke by a reporter. When later information revealed that Mr. Fleming's leg was being pulled and no information had been revealed publicly, Mr. Fleming withdrew his resignation.

There are other cases when a resignation did not occur. The most recent and notable is Ontario's Frank Miller. We just heard about his budget turning up in a garbage can outside a printing company. It was interesting, as reported by the *Toronto Sun* on April 20, 1983, to read this:

Ontario Treasurer Frank Miller said before the budget was tabled that Lalonde should resign if actual details were leaked.

Miller, who will introduce his own budget at Queen's Park next month, said it is his opinion and that of senior officials in his ministry that Lalonde's breach of budget secrecy was serious enough to warrant resignation.

In Mr. Miller's opinion two numbers were bad enough to force a resignation from the federal Minister, but a whole bag full of garbage was not enough to force his.

In 1981, Quebec's Jacques Parizeau was about to reveal his budget and a Member of the Opposition had it several hours early and apparently was showing it around. Despite that, Mr. Parizeau did not resign. In 1978, the current Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources (Mr. Chrétien), shared his budget information with Quebec's Jacques Parizeau. He did so in an exercise to attempt some co-operative pre-budget decision-making. When this was revealed, the Minister said it had been deliberate, that confidentiality had been maintained and that there was no need for his resignation. Of course, in 1983 with our own Minister of Finance, the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) pointed out that there was no real, vital economic information disclosed and, therefore, no reason to treat this as a traditional budget leak.

What about the results for Canada as a whole? The *Toronto Star* on April 21, 1983, wrote, and I will quote just a short part of a very good editorial as follows:

We doubt if the disclosure that the budget deficit is expected to rise to \$31 billion surprised many knowledgeable people. Radio, TV and newspapers have been filled with speculation about the size of the deficit, and \$31 billion is hardly a new figure.

Further down we read:

The Conservatives argue that a budget leak automatically requires the resignation of the minister of finance.

The article continues:

What they conveniently ignore is the contrary precedents.

In another paragraph, we find this:

What's more, Canada's foremost expert on constitutional matters, former senator Eugene Forsey, is of the opinion that Lalonde's resignation is not required, because the leak had nothing to do with taxation matters.

The final excerpts reads:

But in the absence of any sign of damage from the budget leak—there was no evidence of material effect on the external value of the dollar or on interest rates, the two markets particularly sensitive to the size of the budget—the circumstances do not require Lalonde's resignation.

The *Winnipeg Free Press* joined in that assessment. On April 20, we find these words:

The opposition, not surprisingly, is calling now for his resignation, citing the case of Hugh Dalton, the British chancellor of the exchequer, who resigned after giving reporters a hint of changes in the tax on beer.

This article has beer, we have it as cigarettes.

Mr. Deans: They are wrong on the whole thing.

Mr. Fisher: The *Winnipeg Free Press* article goes on:

The situations are not identical, Mr. Lalonde did not himself reveal any part of the budget . . . Three pages did not include any tax changes. The size of the deficit which it predicted was already well known in the community and the revelation had no effect on financial markets. If anything, the incident underlined how out-of-date much of the current obsession with budget secrecy has become.

The then finance critic is from Vancouver. She was irate, overheated and steaming about this leak. She felt apoplectic and she felt it was just about the most terrible thing she had ever seen. However, the *Vancouver Sun* did not agree with her. On April 20, the *Vancouver Sun* printed this in an article:

And, arguments of a budget leak notwithstanding, most of the facts and figures in the document have been the subject of analysis and reporting for almost a month now.

It was Lalonde's unfortunate accident with the camera crew that focused attention on how tentative the budget really is, and hence how believable it may be in the face of sustained opposition attack in the House of Commons.

The *Times Colonist*, also on April 20, 1983, wrote this:

It's hard to tell who deserves the most scorn—those Opposition MPs calling for Finance Minister Marc Lalonde's resignation or the unprincipled media types who pounced on this so-called budget "leak."

What, after all, really happened?

The article concludes with these words:

As for the opposition members demanding Lalonde's resignation, notably PC leader Erik Nielsen and the NDP's Nelson Riis, their incredulous expressions of shock reveal either the quality of their acting or just how removed they are from genuine public concerns.

● (1610)

I conclude by drawing attention to a more recent document, "Canadian Tax News" published by Coopers and Lybrand. It contains some very good advice for all of us.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Blaker): Will the Parliamentary Secretary either do that in 30 seconds or seek the unanimous consent of the House to continue his remarks?

Mr. Fisher: Thirty seconds will be more than adequate. I will read very quickly. I quote:

As Mr. Lalonde said, budget secrecy is an outdated tradition—and so it is. But the principle cannot be changed without the consent of Parliament and it is a pity that the problem has not yet been addressed. The Special Committee on Standing Orders and Procedures of the House of Commons has indicated that it would consider reforms relating to the opening up of the budget process and about all one can say at this stage is "Get on with it!"

This is an unnecessary motion. We are already hard at work on this problem.

Mr. John Evans (Parliamentary Secretary to President of the Privy Council): Mr. Speaker, it is déjà vu to be speaking on this topic today on the motion put forward by the Hon. member for Yukon (Mr. Nielsen). Prior to the Hon. Member for Mississauga North (Mr. Fisher), I was the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance. I was exposed to the kinds of problems that were raised with regard to budget secrecy. I remember the kind of security that surrounded