

agree with him that the whole House should be tied up, diverting attention from the Tory leadership crisis, rather than dealing with essential issues of economic recovery.

REQUEST THAT PROJECT FILES BE TABLED

Mr. Harvie Andre (Calgary Centre): Madam Speaker, this final supplementary question is directed to the Minister of Finance in his capacity as Minister of Finance. I hope he will answer and not let the "Gray" Minister run interference for him.

● (1420)

The extend and timing of this knowledge and the contents of the 1980 budget are clear indication that there was prior knowledge, or at least very substantial clues, hints or suggestions that in fact the contents of the budget were known by perhaps many people—Mr. Gillespie, Devco and Petro-Canada, two Crown corporations in particular. Would the Minister of Finance, in order to clear up this important situation—and he must recognize the absolute vital necessity that the secrecy of a budget be beyond reproach—commit now to have tabled before the House by the appropriate Minister the complete files from the Cape Beton Development Corporation and Petro-Canada dealing with the Scotia Coal Synfuels Project, that is, the files going back to May 27, 1980 and thereon? Would he commit to the House to making that disclosure, or will he continue to cover up?

Hon. Marc Lalonde (Minister of Finance): Madam Speaker, I think the tone of questioning of the Hon. Member clearly indicates that his mind is really made up, whatever the facts are. I would like to point out to him that there is not a shred of evidence of a budget leak in this case.

As far as his question is concerned, I would like to tell him that I will refer the matter to the Minister of Energy and ask him to assess whether there are any further files or documents which could be made available. The Minister stood up in the House and said that he was making available every single sheet of paper which could be made available, in the spirit of the Information Act. I will transmit the request of the Hon. Member to the Minister of Energy.

As far as the budget is concerned, and the talk of a budget leak, I remind the Hon. Member what the budget actually stated in October of 1980. The only reference to anything having to do, by far or closely, with this issue read as follows:

New funds will also be made available to find ways in which the large reserves of Cape Breton coal can be used to enhance energy security in the Maritimes.

Mr. Andre: What about Walsh's memo?

Mr. Lalonde: That is the extent of any reference to coal in the whole budget—big leak! As far as the NEP is concerned, which was another document tabled at the same time as the budget, there is one sentence in the NEP.

This is what it had to say about coal liquefaction:

Oral Questions

"Alternative means to use coal in the production of liquid fuels will also be actively pursued".

How can my friend seriously stand up in the House and make the kind of allegation and the kind of charges that he is making, unless he is indulging in his usual character assassination?

Mr. Andre: The next day the deal was signed.

POSITION OF MINISTER OF FINANCE

Mr. F. Oberle (Prince George-Peace River): Madam Speaker, I have a supplementary question for the same Minister. All of us know, of course, that the strength of this parliamentary institution rests upon nothing else than the integrity and honesty of every person who serves in it. There can be no question as to the public perception of the Minister's conduct in the Synfuels affair. People think that he is guilty; guilty or not, the Minister cannot be trusted.

May I ask the Minister a question in connection with his responsibility as Minister of Finance? Does he not feel that his reputation is tarnished and that it will be very difficult for him to come before the House and before the country with a budget designed to do nothing else but restore confidence in the Canadian economy and in Canada, confidence in the Government and in Canadians themselves? Does he not feel that, as a result of this affair, his reputation is so seriously tarnished that he is no longer in a position to do the job which he was appointed to do by the Prime Minister?

Hon. Marc Lalonde (Minister of Finance): Madam Speaker, I would have to say yes, anybody's reputation would be tarnished by the type of disgusting allegations, like the one just made by my hon. friend, and the ones which have been made by some people across the aisle. That indeed creates a problem, but it would be very wrong on my part to accept that kind of allegation and the argument raised by the Hon. Member. I can tell him that, as far as my functions are concerned, I have received many, many messages of support from people at large and from people in the business community in particular, saying, "Don't let those guys get you down because they are wrong".

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

REQUEST THAT MINISTER RESIGN

Mr. F. Oberle (Prince George-Peace River): The Minister in his defence speaks of his personal sacrifices in terms of finances and his family, sacrifices which most of us make when we come to this institution. Does the Minister not now feel that one more sacrifice is required of him by his country, and indeed by his Party—to put the interests of Canada ahead of the interests of Marc Lalonde, that sacrifice being to resign—

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!