

Oral Questions

[Translation]

Mr. Lapierre: We'll see!

Mr. Mulroney: The Hon. Member for Shefford (Mr. Lapierre) says: "We'll see!", the implication being that he has arguments to the contrary. If that is the case, say so. Stop being such an incredible hypocrite!

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[English]

THE BUDGET**ALLEGED PRIVATE GAIN FROM BUDGET LEAK**

Mr. Brian Tobin (Humber—St. Barbe—Baie Verte): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Prime Minister. I suggest that the Prime Minister confuses his loyalty to his friend, the Finance Minister, with his responsibility to the people of Canada.

Budget information was available 24 hours in advance of the scheduled date, at least, perhaps as early as Tuesday. We know that the actual documents were printed on Sunday and Monday, so perhaps they were available as early as that date. Is the Prime Minister suggesting to the people of Canada that the potential millions of dollars in private benefit given to a privileged few can be legitimized in the interest of keeping his friend, the Minister of Finance, in the federal Cabinet? Is that what he is telling the people of Canada?

Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, if the Hon. Minister of Finance has followed all the historic proceedings in regard to security—

Mr. Lapierre: If.

Mr. Mulroney:—and he has. There is no evidence at all that he has not. If he has fulfilled all of the historic obligations pursuant to his office, and he has because there is no evidence to the contrary, is my hon. friend saying, as a new constitutional principle of ministerial responsibility by the Liberal Party, that henceforth Ministers of the Crown are not only responsible for all within their traditional purview, they are also responsible for criminal acts and misdemeanors performed by others with a view to subverting or sabotaging an honourable ministerial undertaking? If he is saying that, that is a dramatic departure from accepted British parliamentary traditions.

Mr. Tobin: Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister has just articulated a new principle, and it is very simple. It is that friends of the Prime Minister must be saved at any cost, including public trust and public integrity. That is the new principle put forward by the Prime Minister.

• (1450)

REASON FOR REQUEST FOR EXTENDED SITTING

Mr. Brian Tobin (Humber—St. Barbe—Baie Verte): I have a question for the Minister of Justice, and it regards the conduct of the Minister of Finance.

It has been argued today by the Prime Minister and argued earlier by the Minister of Justice, that the Minister of Finance acted immediately when he knew there was a leak. Members of this House know that at 5.50 p.m. yesterday the Minister of Justice, and Government House Leader came into this House and asked for extended hours. He did not tell the Opposition why he wanted extended hours but he asked for them. When the request was refused, he left.

I want to ask the Minister of Justice, did he know yesterday at 5.50 of a Budget leak? Did the Minister of Finance know about a Budget leak? Did the Prime Minister know about a Budget leak? Why didn't they come clean with Parliament at 5.50 when they made a mysterious request for extended hours? Why the cover-up?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Doug Lewis (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada): I was in a committee meeting in Room 209, West Block, and I received a phone call at approximately 5.40 p.m. from the Minister of Finance. The Minister of Finance indicated to me that there was an indication of a possibility of a potential Budget leak.

Some Hon. Members: Cover-up, cover-up.

Mr. Lewis: I said, the potential of a Budget leak. We knew that we had to keep our options open.

Mr. Tobin: Damned right you knew, but you didn't tell us.

Mr. Turner (Vancouver Quadra): What reason did you give to the Speaker?

Mr. Speaker: The Hon. Member has advanced a very specific question, the Minister is trying to answer, and he deserves the courtesy of being allowed to finish.

An Hon. Member: You have just entered your plea of guilty.

Mr. Lewis: As a measure of prudence we made an effort to keep the House open so that in the event that the Budget leak was substantiated we could come to the House of Commons, which is exactly what we asked the Opposition to do last night, but they refused to co-operate.