

*The Budget—Mr. Casey*

I contend that the only reason the Minister of Finance was able to survive that onslaught was that he has built up credibility with the Canadian people year after year. I would even suggest that he has built up his credibility with all Members of Parliament on both sides of the House.

I think as well that the Minister increased his credibility and enhanced his reputation by taking quick action. He was decisive and effective. He set a course of action and stuck to it right from the beginning to the end. I think he deserves a lot of credit for that.

Others involved in the great Canadian leak debate changed direction often while the Minister steered a straight course from beginning to end. Opposition Members seemed to go off in different directions. First they were invited to come to the House to hear the Budget presented, but they said no. Just a short while later, they changed directions and said that they wanted to have the Budget presented to them in the House. Then opposition Members said before the television cameras, and probably one of the biggest audiences the National News ever had, that it was a non-budget given by a non-minister and that they categorically refused to debate it or discuss it. Meanwhile, the Minister kept going in a straight line on his set course.

Shortly thereafter, within hours of saying categorically that they would not discuss or debate the Budget, opposition Members turned around 180 degrees and found themselves both discussing it and debating it in the House. Meanwhile, the Minister of Finance kept on his course.

Finally, the Minister of Finance presented his Budget in the House of Commons and opposition Members all jumped up and walked out except for a few stragglers. Opposition Leaders had to come back to bring them out so that the entire opposition walked out while the Minister of Finance presented his Budget. What opposition Members did not understand was that only they walked out. The people in the gallery stayed. The people did not turn off their television sets. The people stayed and listened to the Minister of Finance. Not only did they listen to him but they stood behind him and supported him.

I think the Minister of Finance set a fine example. His reputation was enhanced and his credibility was increased. The lesson is that if we as politicians are

credible, the public will stand behind us through thick and thin.

Lesson number two is that the public can sort out the wheat from the chaff. I think it is incredible how members of the public can apply common sense to all the information we give them and can arrive at the right decision and the right answer. A good example is this so-called leak. Despite all opposition and media cries that it was a national disaster, that it was the end of the world and that the Minister should resign and take his Budget with him, the Canadian people applied their common sense and said that this was not a national disaster, that no one had been harmed, that there had been no damage and that it was just an unfortunate event. They also realized, by applying their common sense, that damage would be done if the Minister did resign and if he did take his Budget with him.

If the Minister had resigned, it would have created economic chaos for months, our international reputation would have been damaged for years and it would have taken years to overcome it. I give credit to the Canadian people for weeding through all the contradictory information we throw at them.

The same thing applies here. There is so much contradictory information from which the public has to choose to determine the truth about the Budget. Do we really need cut-backs and tax increases? It is very difficult for a regular Canadian like me to know, understand and put into perspective what a national debt of \$330 billion means. What does a deficit every year of \$30 billion or \$40 million mean?

It is difficult to understand but I still believe that the Canadian people have applied their common sense and have come to the conclusion that we do have a problem, that we must address it and that we will address it. I would like to pay tribute again to the members of the public for their ability to do that. I would also like to pay tribute to the Minister of Finance for setting a fine example for new Members and for senior Members as well.

• (1510)

My comments on the Budget will be brief. First of all, I do not believe there is such a thing as government money or government funding, only people's money. The people provide funds to the Government in trust to be distributed to Canadians who need it the most and for