

The 19th Edition of Erskine May notes, at page 141, that:

To abstract any record or other document from the custody of the Clerk — will constitute a contempt.

Last night, having delivered it to the custody of the Clerk, the Minister of Finance abstracted from his Budget speech in front of the nation's television.

As well, Erskine May notes at page 138:

Disobedience to the orders of either House, — is a contempt of that House.

The House had ordered the Budget speech be presented in this House, not in a TV studio, at five o'clock this afternoon, not at 10.15 last night.

There has been a most serious breach of the privileges of this House by the Finance Minister.

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[*Translation*]

THE BUDGET

THE LEAK—THE EXTENT OF THE MINISTER'S RESPONSIBILITY

Mr. Guy St-Julien (Abitibi): Mr. Speaker, budget secrecy appears to be so sacred they are asking for the resignation of the Minister of Finance (Mr. Wilson) because the theft, I repeat theft, of a public document, just led to parts of the 1989 Budget being revealed.

Last night, all Canadians received the same information almost simultaneously. What is the problem? Michael Wilson has not absconded with public funds. He has not committed a crime or sold State secrets. When someone steals something from a store, do we arrest the shopkeeper? No, Mr. Speaker!

Mr. Speaker, how could anyone blame the Minister of Finance in this case?

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[*English*]

THE BUDGET

LEAK OF DOCUMENT—SUGGESTED ACTIONS

Mr. Ron MacDonald (Dartmouth): Mr. Speaker, the people of Canada stand shocked today by the unprecedented leak of an entire Budget document, more than 24 hours prior to its proper presentation before the House of Commons. Indeed, news reports indicate that individuals unknown were openly peddling purported Budget documents to local media outlets as early as yesterday afternoon.

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This unprecedented bungling has undermined the integrity of the entire parliamentary system. Will this Government not now do the right thing: Admit its folly, fire its Minister, can this scandalous document and restore confidence to our parliamentary system.

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THE BUDGET

SUPPORT FOR MINISTER OF FINANCE

Mr. Larry Schneider (Regina—Wascana): Mr. Speaker, I rise to address the process involving the presentation of the federal Budget. The Opposition have cried an irresponsible cry for the resignation of our Finance Minister (Mr. Wilson). This theatrical reaction is not what ordinary Canadians expect from the Opposition.

In order to provide the kind of measures required to guarantee total security for the Budget, a Gestapo-like environment would be necessary. The Government would be compelled to incarcerate all personnel involved in the process, from the printing to the final distribution. Is the Opposition suggesting a police state, an aura of Fascism?

This is not a matter of Government incompetence. This is a criminal act and, in my opinion, an act of treason. Our Finance Minister is and shall remain Canada's Finance Minister. He will be recognized historically by all Canadians as one of Canada's bravest, most dedicated and competent parliamentarians.

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THE BUDGET

CALL FOR RESIGNATION OF MINISTER OF FINANCE

Ms. Audrey McLaughlin (Yukon): Mr. Speaker, the credibility of the Minister of Finance (Mr. Wilson) and his integrity have been seriously put in question by events related to this Budget. Canadians are asking: Where is the accountability of this Government?

Upon learning that his Budget had been leaked to the press, why did the Minister of Finance not come directly to this House and not give a press conference Budget? It is the people's representatives who should hear about the Budget and not the Press Club.

Canadians are asking: Where is the trust? This is not solely a case of breaking parliamentary tradition. It is far more serious than that. It is a breach of trust between the Canadian people and the Canadian Government. For weeks the Finance Minister has been preparing Canadians to bite the bullet with his new Budget. I call upon the Prime Minister (Mr. Mulroney) to bite the bullet. We need a new Finance Minister and a new Budget. The Finance Minister must resign.