

Privilege

Mr. Gray (Windsor West): The Minister of Justice has not demonstrated to this House, nor to the Canadian people, that it was not possible for a limited number of individuals to benefit improperly through the early disclosure of the information in his Budget. We have been doing some checking, and it is certainly clear from the information that we have that people in various time zones around the country or around the world could well have learned of this information in the Budget when it was broadcast, and that orders for transactions could have been given in various Exchanges in a way that they could benefit from enormously, in ways that were quite absent from the opportunities of Canadians generally.

The Minister of Finance comes in here and sanctimoniously tries to wash his hands of the whole matter.

Some Hon. Members: Shame!

Mr. Gray (Windsor West): But that is not enough in terms of his responsibility as Minister of Finance and in terms of his responsibility as a Minister of the Crown for those who answer to him.

The final point I want to make is with respect to precedent. It is interesting to hear the Minister of Justice trying to recant the words he used in this House in 1983 in connection with the Lalonde case, a very different case. It involved only one small element of a budget, and did not involve anything from which people could have benefited personally. The Minister of Justice, as I have said, is attempting to recant his words. I do not know if the Minister of Finance behind the curtains has wrestled him to the ground and made him cry uncle and go into the House to do this, but these words are still on the record of *Hansard*. These words are an endorsement of other words spoken by the present Minister of Industry, Science and Technology, the then Member for Calgary Centre (Mr. Andre). The Member for Calgary Centre said in *Hansard* at page 24635:

It has been established very clearly that there has been important information leaked to the public, information that dramatically affects public financial markets from a document identified by the Minister of Finance as the Budget.

The Hon. Member for Calgary Centre (Mr. Andre) went on to say:

This House has the absolute right to establish procedures, rules and requirements. One of the absolute rights of the House, established over hundreds of years, is the right to hear the Government's budgetary proposal before anybody else, or simultaneously with anybody else.

The Member went on to say:

Nothing could be more fundamental to the privileges of every Member elected by Canadian citizens than that we be told of the budget by the Minister of Finance in this House and not learn about it from television reports or speeches that he makes to the Chamber of Commerce or by some other method. Nothing is more fundamental than that, Madam Speaker. Any self-respecting Minister of Finance would resign.

Those are the words of the Hon. Member for Calgary Centre in 1983. I trust he will not get up and try to recant what he put on the record at that time, because he made a very valid and sound statement of principle that should be followed by the Government, the Minister of Finance (Mr. Wilson) and the Prime Minister (Mr. Mulroney) today.

• (1230)

After the Member for Calgary Centre took his seat, the Member for Simcoe North (Mr. Lewis), now the Minister of Justice, was recognized and said, as reported at page 24636 of *Hansard*:

Madam Speaker, I wish to address a few brief remarks to this question of privilege and perhaps to wrap up the argument for this side.

He went on to say:

—I support the argument of my colleague, the Hon. Member for Calgary Centre (Mr. Andre), that the privileges of all Members of the House have been breached in that we read about and saw on television matters which were obviously in the budget which will be presented tonight.

It is a breach of our privileges as Members that this material was disseminated through the media before it was presented to the House. The effect on the market, the effect on what action private citizens will take, has yet to be seen. The question of whether or not the Prime Minister will stand on tradition has yet to be known.

Then the Minister of Justice went on to argue that one of the privileges of Members of this House was the right to confidentiality. Then he in effect concluded by saying:

We would argue that in either case, whether you take the argument of the Hon. Member for Calgary Centre or my argument, the privileges of a Member or Members of the House have been breached.

The Member for Calgary Centre and the present Minister of Justice, as I understood their remarks, did not put qualifications on them to limit them only to the case of the then Minister of Finance, Mr. Lalonde. They were stating what they considered to be principles of general and permanent application. It is hardly credible for the Minister of Justice now to get on his feet and say: "I recant, I did not mean to say what I did, I wish I could expunge it from the record". It is there. It is on the record. It counts now no less than the Minister of Justice intended it to count at that time.