

Oral Questions

elsewhere, of the allegations, or else one goes to the securities commission or to the RCMP with the requisite proof. However, it would be irresponsible to speculate about facts that have not been corroborated. The investigation is underway, Mr. Speaker, and as soon as we have the facts, the findings, we will be able to disclose them.

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[English]

HOUSE OF COMMONS**PRESENCE IN GALLERY OF PRESIDENT OF THE PEOPLES' ASSEMBLY OF MOZAMBIQUE**

Mr. Speaker: I wish to bring to the attention of Hon. Members the presence in the gallery of Mr. Marcelino Dos Santos, President of the Peoples' Assembly of Mozambique.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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THE BUDGET**ALLEGATIONS OF PRIVATE GAIN FROM BUDGET LEAK—REQUEST THAT MINISTER RESIGN**

Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Winnipeg South Centre): Mr. Speaker, I want to return to the essential question of ministerial responsibility, particularly in this case, the responsibility of the Minister of Finance as trustee of the public purse. Yesterday afternoon the Minister and his colleagues knew that there had been a leak of vital information on the Budget, in fact the entire Budget. There is now evidence that that leakage was widespread and that there were a number of sources.

Mr. Clark (Yellowhead): What evidence?

An Hon. Member: Where is the evidence of that?

Mr. Axworthy (Winnipeg South Centre): He also knew that the stock markets of this country were still open, particularly those on the West Coast where shares in companies affected by the Budget, like Air Canada, were already traded.

Under those circumstances it was clear that the opportunity for private advantage, for private gain existed, which fundamentally breaks the principle of budget secrecy and ministerial accountability. Therefore, why did the Minister not withdraw the Budget and do the honourable thing and resign?

Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, I think the Minister explained this morning, in response to other questions, the reason for the actions that were taken. The initial intention, when the information became known, was to bring the Budget to the House of Commons. Unfortunately, because of the absence of consent, we were prevented from bringing it to the House.

I have explained to my hon. friend the manner in which the Minister has always discharged his responsibilities, in this case as well.

In fact, I bring to the attention of my hon. friend from Winnipeg a comment in this morning's *Winnipeg Free Press*, which states in regard to the Minister: "The Minister cannot, however, reasonably be held responsible for the illegal actions of functionaries far beyond his control".

The *Winnipeg Free Press* takes a reasonable and thoughtful position on this matter, and I urge it upon the Member for Winnipeg South Centre.

REQUEST THAT BUDGET BE WITHDRAWN

Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Winnipeg South Centre): Mr. Speaker, with all due respect, the Prime Minister has it wrong. The questions being raised are not about whether the Minister of Finance was responsible for illegal actions. But he is responsible for the Budget of Canada. He is responsible for whether that Budget gives private advantage to certain individuals. Therefore, he must take responsibility for proceeding with a Budget which has all the potential of giving private advantage, private gain, private profit to individuals as a result of this secrecy. Therefore, is it not true that both the Minister of Finance and the Prime Minister had only one honourable option, which was to withdraw the Budget? No Budget or Minister stands above the rights of this Parliament or the rights of Canadians to be treated fairly and properly in the Budget process.

Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, if the Hon. Minister has followed all of the appropriate procedures that have existed over the decades—

Some Hon. Members: If.

Mr. Mulroney: And the evidence is that he has.