

*Privilege—Mr. Riis*

the orderly conduct of parliamentary business. I submit that this is comparable to a leak of budget information. In other words, given prior knowledge of the contents of this Bill, those individuals with that knowledge would be able to take advantage of it and make private personal gain. If foreign nationals were aware of the contents of a Bill which would significantly alter the production and marketing of drugs in Canada, it could have obvious and profound implications for the value of certain businesses both here and in the U.S.

I would like to make special reference to the leaking of information in the past which indicate the severity of this particular instance. In 1974 in the United Kingdom the Chancellor of the Exchequer made an offhand comment to a journalist on the evening of the presentation of his Budget. Because of the timing of a certain edition of the paper for which the journalist worked, news of a particular detail of the Budget came out prior to the Budget Speech. The Chancellor of the Exchequer, Mr. Hugh Dalton at the time, when he recognized his indiscretion, submitted forthwith his resignation which was accepted the following day.

In 1936, also in the United Kingdom, a Minister of the Crown made certain comments about the Budget which led to certain activity on the stock market. As soon as the Chancellor of the Exchequer learned of this, and believing that there was at least a clear possibility of a leak of budgetary information, he immediately initiated an investigation. That investigation led to the disclosure that the other Minister was responsible and the Minister in question felt the obligation to resign.

We all remember the incident not long ago, and I remember it vividly because I was finance critic for the NDP at the time, on Monday, April 18, 1983, when the then Minister of Finance, while leafing through his Budget Speech before the television cameras, inadvertently revealed a number of pages of the Budget Speech. I think it would be useful for Members of the House and yourself to read for a moment from *Hansard* the comments made at that time by the then Leader of the Opposition, the Hon. Member for Yukon (Mr. Nielsen). On Tuesday, April 19, 1983, he had this to say:

Madam Speaker, I rise to raise a question of privilege involving a most serious budget leak which occurred yesterday. This being the first opportunity to raise that question, I take the opportunity. After hearing my submissions, no doubt you will want to seek the advice of other Hon. Members on the matter I raise. I would be prepared to move the appropriate motion should you find that there is a prima facie case of privilege.

He went on to say, and this is the critical part:

Budget secrecy is a basic principle of our traditions of parliamentary Government. It means that the Minister responsible for bringing down a Budget is also held responsible to see to it that the provisions of that Budget are not prematurely released. The reasons for this are many. Foreknowledge of budgetary measures has led to the acquisition of private gain and to sharp market fluctuations.

● (1210)

As an aside, the case I am making today would indicate that the two cases we are now discussing are not dissimilar. Individuals, in this case outside of Canada, certainly stood to

gain privately from prior knowledge of what the Bill was to include.

The Member for the Yukon went on to say:

My information is current that those fluctuations are taking place and that the Canadian dollar is indeed now falling on the markets.

It is not a principle that it is necessary to defend; it has been accepted in the parliamentary system ever since budgets existed. A breach of budget secrecy has always and invariably led to the resignation of the Minister.

It must also be regarded as a breach of the oath which the Minister takes as a member of the Privy Council.

A well known case in the United Kingdom was that involving the then Chancellor of the Exchequer, Hugh Dalton, who, in a casual conversation with reporters, hinted at a rise in the tax on tobacco. I will be coming back to that precedent. His resignation as a result of this imprudence took place immediately.

Showing the seriousness with which the British House regards such matters, even though Mr. Dalton resigned the matter was referred to a special committee for a full investigation. Referring to the Dalton case among others, Professor S. R. Finer in public administration says that it was a case which raised "such doubts about his personal prudence and integrity as to cause him to resign".

That is exactly the present case. This is not the first time the Minister has found himself in difficulties. He signed approval of the Gillespie contract and forgot that he had signed or seen it. It must be recalled that Mr. Gillespie was in a position to profit as a result of a measure included in the first budget presented by this Minister.

While the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) was satisfied that there was nothing in the guidelines to concern him in that episode, this is not a mere matter of guidelines. This is a matter reaching into the very heart of parliamentary integrity.

What of the Minister's integrity? It would seem even redundant now to discuss it. It is a thing of rags and tatters. Prudence is a word that cannot be uttered in the same breath as the present Minister of Finance (Mr. Lalonde).

There is extant a videotape showing the previous Minister of Finance at a photo opportunity and deliberately holding the page of his budget address close because, as he explains, "The cameramen are equipped with farseeing lenses". I am referring now to the previous Minister who, when caught in the same circumstances, held his budget close. He would not open the pages because he was aware of the telephoto lenses. That was his attitude at that time.

The then Leader of the Opposition went on with the following important comments:

This Minister is entirely different. He clowned, he joked, and he talked in his interview of zoom lenses. I have a copy of that tape. He joked and said: "I hope you fellows do not have zoom lenses".

He joked about the secrecy of that document and closed it up at one stage during that photo opportunity session so that it could not be seen. But he later opened it up to the exposure of the telephoto lenses. The question might be asked: "Did he know that they were shooting the pages of the budget as he turned them? He certainly was aware of the availability of zoom lenses because he himself mentioned that fact. All the time that this was going on and he was basking in the sunshine of self-indulgent publicity, his budget was being transferred to videotape. The great video leak was in full swing.

I remember that very distinctly, Mr. Speaker, because at the time which the then Leader of the Opposition was explaining, I was discussing the situation with the then Minister of Finance. He was indeed very concerned. We had a lengthy discussion during which he recognized that if there was sufficient information to be used inappropriately, it was in fact a breach of the privileges of the House. He recognized that at that time. However, as it turned out, as you well recall, that was not deemed to be the case by the Speaker. The Hon. Member for Yukon (Mr. Nielsen) continued: