

Oral Questions

● (1440)

FINANCE

MINISTER'S STATEMENTS ON BUDGET

Mr. Ian Deans (Hamilton Mountain): Madam Speaker, my question is also directed to the Prime Minister and is related to the questions which were asked previously. Yesterday in the House of Commons the Minister of Finance said, in response to a question by the Hon. Member for Kamloops-Shuswap, "... my budget is now decided". Yesterday, outside the House of Commons, the Minister of Finance said, holding up a document, "This is my budget." Yesterday the press who were present on the second occasion photographed portions of that document and relayed to the public the content of the document. Is it not reasonable to conclude that, if in fact those things which were contained in that document are not part of the budget, the Minister of Finance either misled the House or misled the public?

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Madam Speaker, let us try to understand the logic of the Members of the two Opposition Parties. They are expressing shock and dismay that there has been a budget leak, but they are saying that, if by any chance the Minister should change his budget so that there will not be a leak, they will also be shocked and dismayed. Let them make up their minds.

Mr. Deans: That is not what I am saying. I am saying that when a Minister of Finance has a budget already made up and then, by negligence, allows that budget to go to the public ahead of the normal practice of first bringing it to the House of Commons, the Minister of Finance is showing a degree of incompetence, the likes of which should result in him having to leave that portfolio.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

POSSIBLE REWRITING OF BUDGET

Mr. Ian Deans (Hamilton Mountain): Madam Speaker, if the Minister of Finance is now in the process of rewriting his budget because of his inadvertence or stupidity, is it not reasonable to assume that the budget we will see will not be the budget which was intended to meet the problems of the country, and therefore will not be adequate to meet the difficulties which many people in the country have been facing? He can rewrite it in half an hour.

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Madam Speaker, I can only repeat my previous point. If Opposition Members think that there was a serious leak, a leak which is contrary to practice and contrary to the proper conduct of a Minister of Finance—

Mr. Stevens: Now you have got it.

Mr. Trudeau:—why would they object to the Minister of Finance changing his budget in some way?

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Trudeau: What the Opposition is arguing is that a budget becomes a budget, and unchangeable, at any point in time. That is not our view. A budget becomes a budget, and every precedent that has been quoted has had to do with a budget, when that has been delivered in the House of Commons. There has been no budget delivered in the House of Commons. There has been a peek at a document which might or might not—

Mr. Clark: Which Marc Lalonde called a budget.

Mr. Trudeau:—have been brought into the House of Commons, but we will only know tonight if that so-called peek was at the document and at the pages which were going to be part of the budget. Why does the Opposition not wait to see in fact if that peek was justified by what has been written, or whether it was a peek at something that did not make its way into the final budget. We will see.

Mr. Hnatyshyn: Get him to write you a letter like he did in the Gillespie affair.

EXISTENCE OF VIDEOTAPE

Hon. Erik Nielsen (Leader of the Opposition): Madam Speaker, my question is directed to the Prime Minister. It is the practice, as he knows, for Finance Ministers to show the Prime Minister their budgets. Was he shown the budget prior to the photo opportunity yesterday? Is the budget that he was likely shown prior to that opportunity the same one which will be presented tonight? I do not want him to say anything about what is going to be in it.

In addition to that, he has accused the media, the television networks and the radio networks, of speculation. How does he explain away—

An Hon. Member: Agreed.

Mr. Nielsen: His supporters in the back benches say, "agreed", that it is all speculation. How does the Prime Minister explain away the existence of a videotape, a copy of which I have and a copy of which I am sure he has seen by now, that provides living proof in living colour of the actual text of the French version of two pages of that budget which, translated, have resulted in ten separate leaks that I put on the record this morning in the discussion in the House? How does he explain away the existence of that tape?

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Madam Speaker, there are several questions there. Dealing with the last one first, how do I explain it? I explain it by the fact that the Minister of Finance, following previous practice, invited the media, the cameras, for a photo opportunity into his room. It has been done before. He did it again. He did it in the same way. Wisely or unwisely he trusted the cameramen to take pictures of the situation, but not to try to find out what was in the budget, much as when there is a lockup before the budget, a lockup which has been made for many, many years with the written press, a lockup of several hours, during which they are