

The Budget

consequences simply by getting one more page ready during the night to stick in his budget speech. It says at the top here:

Insert after paragraph 1, page 3—

It sounds like an instruction from the drugstore:

Insert after paragraph 1, page 3 in this addendum.

Then it goes on. It costs the Canadian taxpayer \$200 million to give the Minister an excuse that he had not engaged in a budget leak. That is the most expensive leak anyone we know of in Canada ever had, a \$200 million leak. The whole process was just to save the Minister's neck when he should have come in here and resigned following his budget speech and accepted the responsibility and said that these were the rules.

Can the Prime Minister not find another Minister of Finance? There are, what is it, 146 Hon. Members opposite, and yet there are not enough of them so that one other person could be found to be Minister of Finance? We know he tried the Deputy Prime Minister and Secretary of State for External Affairs, and we would like to have him back. We think it would be a definite plus for electoral purposes if we could get the Celtic Sphinx back. The hon. Celtic Sphinx, I guess I should say, Mr. Speaker. I am not going to use his name, I am saying he is the Hon. Member for Cape Breton-Highlands-Canso, now the Secretary of State for External Affairs. Surely someone else could take over as Minister of Finance.

We know this motion is not going to be accepted by the Government, unless it continues with its changed practices of the last several weeks. All its says is, let us have a committee appointed, have the circumstances looked into and decide whether or not there should be budget secrecy. Perhaps it is time to throw the whole thing out. I notice that the Ontario Provincial Treasurer, Larry Grossman, said today in *The Globe and Mail* that they are going to open up the budgetary preparation process to allow Opposition politicians and the public to contribute to the development of the budget. He said:

We believe the veil of secrecy surrounding the development of budgets should be lifted—

He goes on to say:

In an era when economic problems are complex and need as much analysis and consultation as possible, the current preoccupation with secrecy is, we believe, over-emphasized.

Well, why not have somebody in the House look at this problem, Mr. Speaker, and devise some sensible guidelines that will not be changed whenever the Prime Minister finds someone in conflict with them, which will define what is today a violation of budget secrecy and what is not, and for what kind of actions the Minister should or should not be found culpable and responsible and open up the budget process? I started that trend myself in 1979. It was the first budget, of course, in which Canadian problems were dealt with in any kind of an honest fashion in the last 20 years. The result was that the NDP and Liberals went berserk and made sure it was defeated, because they do not want to see problems dealt with honestly or straightforwardly or difficult solutions attempted. But we did start to open up the process then.

As a matter of fact, it was in that budget that for the first time five-year forecasts were given. We can see the five-year forecast the present Minister of Finance has brought down. It shows the miserable prospects for us over the next five years, but at least we know what the official thinking is in connection with those forecasts. In the brief eight months we were in power considerable changes for the better were implemented, and it is time now for the Government to open up the budget process, as Ontario says it is going to do. It is time for this House to decide what the rules should be.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, I think the Parliamentary Secretary is going to address himself to this. He sits there looking very pleased, and I think he is going to announce that he accepts this motion. I suggest to him that he do that and that we get this matter thought about and have a report that we can consider to bring Canada into a new modern age of honesty, which of course is not too likely as long as they remain in power.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Blaker): Before I recognize the next Hon. Member may I draw the attention of Hon. Members to the fact that procedurally I made an error earlier today, as I often do. I indicated that the motion stood in the name of the Hon. Member for Yukon (Mr. Nielsen), and seconded by the Hon. Member for St. John's West, (Mr. Crosbie), but because the Hon. Member for St. John's West then took the floor, that apparently is not acceptable under our rules. If I might have the unanimous consent of the House, we can fix the problem. Accordingly, the motion moved by Mr. Nielsen and seconded by Mr. Crosbie would be withdrawn and, with the unanimous consent of the House, replaced by the same motion moved by the Hon. Member for St. John's West and seconded by the Hon. Member for Peterborough (Mr. Domm).

Mr. Bob Ogle (Saskatoon East): Mr. Speaker, I would like to add a few words to this motion proposed, according to your ruling, by the Hon. Member for St. John's West (Mr. Crosbie). I would like to go on record as saying we support the general idea of this motion that a special committee be appointed to inquire into the circumstances of the disclosure of budget information by the Minister on April 18, 1983. We are concerned about that incident and we would like to see this special committee set up to investigate it.

I realize that history has passed us by and nothing can be done about that particular incident or what happened following it. As the Hon. Member for St. John's West pointed out, the Minister of Finance (Mr. Lalonde) did not resign after the breaking of secrecy, as it was understood in this House, and the proceedings of the House continued without having the problem addressed in the form of a resignation and another budget. We cannot undo what has taken place. But I do think the fact that it did take place, that secrecy was broken and the Minister did not resign would certainly justify a committee of this House seriously looking at the whole notion of secrecy as it relates to the budget. It could question our traditions, indeed question us as well as people across the country, to see whether