

Oral Questions

May 28 commemorates a nation that has suffered extreme adversity and has risen to the challenge. I would like to laud the Armenian people in Don Valley North and throughout the world on their determination to overcome their many obstacles and setbacks on their declared day of independence.

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

[English]

THE BUDGET

TIMING OF BRIEFING OF MINISTER

Hon. Herb Gray (Windsor West): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Finance. I want to ask the Minister about the Government's conspiracy to bury the truth from Canadians about his handling of the budget leaks, a conspiracy about which it has been found out.

Yesterday, the Minister of Finance said that he had not been informed about the second budget leak, the Mutual Life leak, until after Question Period on April 27. On that day, the Minister was facing the worst crisis of his career. He was about to go into Question Period to be grilled on his handling of a leaked Budget.

At 1.30 or 1.40 before that Question Period, an official of his Department or his office received a call from the president of Mutual Life who informed that individual that Mutual Life had a copy of the *Budget in Brief* and there was therefore a second, more serious budget leak.

I want to ask the Minister this: Does he expect Canadians to believe that he was not briefed by his officials in the some 20 minutes between the call from the president of Mutual Life and two o'clock and the period of 15 minutes for Members' Statements between two o'clock and 2.15, and that he was not informed by note during the 45 minutes for questions on that day about this second budget leak? Does he expect Canadians to believe that his officials are so incompetent? Why does he not tell us what really happened?

Hon. Michael Wilson (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, I find it very strange that the Hon. Member would say that we were involved in a conspiracy when one of the first things that we did was to turn this

information over to the RCMP. How could that possibly be a conspiracy?

The Hon. Member is asking whether I was informed prior to Question Period. I have stated quite categorically in this House that I was not. It is a very clear tradition in this House that we accept the words, the word of Hon. Members.

I have a great deal of respect for this place, as I know the House Leader for the Liberal Party also has a great deal of respect for this place.

I have never misled this House. I have always treated this House with a great deal of respect. I continue to do so. My answer to his question very clearly is: no, I was not informed.

TIMING OF RECEIPT OF INFORMATION

Hon. Herb Gray (Windsor West): Mr. Speaker, the Minister says that he was not informed. I want to ask him this: Who exactly received the call from the president of Mutual Life and what did that individual and other Finance individuals do with that information during the missing 90 minutes between the receipt of the call and the period when the Minister was informed?

Did that official and other Finance officials inform the Principal Secretary to the Prime Minister? Did they inform the Prime Minister himself? Did they inform the Deputy Prime Minister? Did they inform the Minister of Justice?

I ask the Minister of Finance to come clean with Canadians and tell us exactly what happened during the 90-minute gap, during those missing 90 minutes? Canadians expect and have a right to receive a full explanation of what happened during that 90-minute gap.

• (1120)

Hon. Michael Wilson (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, members from my staff as well as from the Department had a telephone conversation with Mr. Masterman. Subsequent to that I believe their first actions were to inform the RCMP to determine what the RCMP were working on. Subsequent to the initiation of the investigation on the previous night, Wednesday night, those people were advised of this information, and that was part of the same investigation. After that, I cannot be precise on time. Yes, they did advise the Clerk