

Oral Questions

at least 90 minutes? Who made that decision? Surely to goodness after almost one week the Deputy Prime Minister now knows who made that decision.

Hon. Don Mazankowski (Deputy Prime Minister, President of the Privy Council and Minister of Agriculture): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Finance answered that question in the House on Friday. As I said before, the decision about the way in which the Budget was going to be handled was taken on Wednesday night.

If Hon. Members had any information about further leaks, they were duty-bound to inform the RCMP, not to raise it on the floor of the House of Commons. That is what was done. That was the proper course of action.

After the Budget was released to the Canadian people, the issue with respect to the investigation of unauthorized possession of the document was a law-enforcement matter, and that is where it stands.

DUTY OF OFFICIALS

Mr. Lorne Nystrom (Yorkton—Melville): Mr. Speaker, it seems to me that the Minister's officials were duty-bound to tell the Minister that they had received a call about 1.30 from Mr. Masterman, who is the President of a life insurance company with assets of around \$11 billion.

What I want to know is who made the decision to keep the Minister of Finance in the dark for at least 90 minutes?

I remember Rosemary Woods. I remember Richard Nixon. What I want to know is who—

Mr. Speaker: The Hon. Minister.

Hon. Don Mazankowski (Deputy Prime Minister, President of the Privy Council and Minister of Agriculture): Mr. Speaker, that is the same question and I have answered it, so has the Minister of Finance.

COMPETENCE OF MINISTERIAL STAFF UNDER QUESTION

Mr. Lorne Nystrom (Yorkton—Melville): Mr. Speaker, I will put the question a different way.

People out in the countryside are asking the following question. They are saying that either the Minister's staff panicked and were incompetent, or else the Minister's staff had received orders from higher up to keep the Minister in the dark.

I want to know from the Deputy Prime Minister which one was it? Was the staff incompetent and they panicked and did not tell the Minister of Finance, or were they operating on orders from above to keep him in the dark until after Question Period?

Hon. Don Mazankowski (Deputy Prime Minister, President of the Privy Council and Minister of Agriculture): Mr. Speaker, what Canadians are wondering is why we are engaged in this charade, which is driving down the dollar and undermining the confidence of the Canadian economy. That is what many people are wondering.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Mazankowski: It is about time for a little responsibility and a little sense of fair play. The opposition Parties can disagree very fundamentally with the course that was chosen. The course was chosen on Wednesday night when it became evident that there was unauthorized possession of a budgetary leak.

The matter was turned over to the RCMP. Efforts were made to bring the House of Commons back so the Minister of Finance could introduce his Budget in the House of Commons, as is the tradition. That support and co-operation was not forthcoming, so the Budget was tabled.

Anything about any further leaks or suggested leaks or associated leaks or potential leaks was a matter for the RCMP. It then became a law enforcement matter. Surely the Hon. Member understands that.

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

PRESENCE IN GALLERY OF THE RIGHT HON. MALCOLM FRASER, FORMER PRIME MINISTER OF AUSTRALIA

Mr. Speaker: I wish to draw to the attention of Members the presence in the gallery of the Right Hon. Malcolm Fraser, Former Prime Minister of Australia and Chairman of the United Nations Expert Group on African Commodity Problems.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!