

evening, he found his house had been broken into. The burglars had found his briefcase and broken the lock. The draft budget speech was strewn about the floor but still intact.

More sophisticated thieves might have realized that some enterprising reporter could have been a good market for this prize.

This is the important part:

If that had happened and inspired stories had been published about what might be expected to be included in the budget to be presented in the following week, as the responsible minister I would have had to resign from the government immediately.

That is what Walter Gordon said and that is the view held by every person in politics in Canada today.

Mr. Munro (Esquimalt-Saanich): Integrity.

Mr. Deans: That is the view which has been handed down from one Minister of Finance to the next, through every Government which has been in existence in this country. I believe that it is also the view that the present Minister of Finance (Mr. Lalonde) would claim to be his view, that budget secrecy is an absolute must.

What happened in the case of Hugh Dalton, to which reference was given by the Leader of the Opposition and, obliquely, by the Hon. Member for Durham-Northumberland (Mr. Lawrence), although quite different from the situation now, is an interesting example of how a responsible Minister and his responsible Parliament deal with such an indiscretion.

What happened, in fact, was that at the Cabinet meeting it was brought to the Minister's attention that a story intended to be a projection of what might be contained in the budget had been printed in a local newspaper. Hugh Dalton immediately recognized that that story had come from his own lips, that he had given out that information, albeit not intentionally. He knew immediately, and on page 276 of his memoirs of the years 1945 to 1960, he said that he had informed his colleagues that he had spoken to Carvel, who was the reporter, and went on to say:

We all agreed that I must make full and frank admission of my responsibility and express my deep regrets and apologies to the House.

He then said to his colleagues:

This means that I must resign my office.

I make that point because, in the Hugh Dalton case, it was such a slip. He had taken precautions to ensure that the budget would not be known to anyone.

In the case of Mr. Plumptre, acting on behalf of Walter Gordon, the Minister of the time, he, too, had taken every precaution. However, in each instance they came to the conclusion that budget secrecy was an absolute must.

Now, I suggest—

Madam Speaker: Order, please. I would like the Hon. Member to realize that he must indicate the relationship of that to the Chair. We all agree that the principle of budget secrecy is accepted by all Parliaments and by all Governments. We all accept the fact that Ministers take an oath and that they must be loyal to their oath. However, what is necessary is

Privilege—Mr. Nielsen

for Hon. Members to prove to the Chair and to indicate to the Chair—

Mr. Nielsen: Not prove.

Madam Speaker: Not prove, that is right. They must indicate to the Chair in what way the breach of that oath or of that secrecy interferes with the privileges of the House. That is the very important and, I might say, narrower point.

The arguments which are being presented to the Chair now would have to relate to the debate which would ensue on the Chair finding a prima facie of privilege. The substance of the matter should not be debated now. The only thing that is important now is to demonstrate to the Chair the relationship of what has taken place or allegedly taken place to the matter of privilege.

I just want to caution Hon. Members that I would like to rule on this matter before the Question Period. I think it is obvious to Hon. Members why I would like to rule. Otherwise, the Question Period would pose some difficulties for Hon. Members who might want to ask questions related to the actuality. After all, that is what the Question Period is all about.

I am in the hands of the House. If many Hon. Members want to intervene, I will listen to them. However, I would plead with them not to repeat the arguments which some Hon. Members have already put forward. There has already been much repetition, and that is not very useful. The only thing that that will achieve is to pose some very grave difficulties in Question Period. I am warning the House now that I will have to apply the rules—

Mr. Lawrence: This is more important. Privilege certainly takes priority.

Madam Speaker:—that if a ruling is in suspense, no questions may be asked relating to that particular matter.

Mr. Lawrence: Surely privilege takes priority.

Madam Speaker: Therefore, I will now listen to the Hon. Member for Hamilton Mountain with this warning.

Mr. Deans: Madam Speaker, I appreciate being informed of that. I want to suggest that the reason I laid it out in the way I did is because I wanted to point out that in the case now before us, recognizing that budget secrecy is an accepted requirement of the Minister of Finance, recognizing that this is historically true, and that other Ministers of Finance and Chancellors of the Exchequer have recognized that they must report to the House of Commons in advance of anyone else, the privilege centres around the privileges of Hon. Members to be informed according to the practices which have been followed since the beginning of time in the parliamentary system, the requirement to provide Members of Parliament with that which is accepted by everyone as the practice both here and in Westminster.