

The Budget

In other countries, particularly the United Kingdom, this is treated with a great deal of strictness. Any kind of budget leak, no matter how apparently minor, results in the resignation of the Minister of Finance, except in Canada. We all remember the 1947 incident when Hugh Dalton, the Labour Chancellor of the Exchequer, resigned because, on his way into the House to give the budget speech, when a reporter in the lobby asked him if there would be a change in the tobacco tax, he indicated that there would be. Because that became public and was in the newspapers before he gave the information to the House, he was forced to resign.

Even in this country, Madam Speaker, in earlier years the Liberal Party used to be sensitive to some degree to the traditions of Parliament. In 1963, Walter Gordon, then the Minister of Finance, tendered his resignation. Prime Minister Pearson did not accept it, but Mr. Gordon did tender it because he had consulted four economists. Four persons had been involved in the preparation of his budget who were not members of the Department of Finance. They were from outside Government and they knew the details of the budget. Because he had done that and because of the furore when it became public knowledge, he tendered his resignation. That was at a time when the Liberal Party had some kind of conscience. When it started out in 1963, 20 long years ago, it paid some attention to the traditions of Parliament in the House of Commons and the Minister of Finance of the day tendered his resignation, even though it was not accepted.

Today, the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) is uncaring about parliamentary traditions. When the Gillespie affair was debated some months ago, even he seemed to recognize that a violation of budget secrecy required the resignation of the Minister of Finance. On February 18 in this House, as reported at page 22978 of *Hansard*, he referred to the Dalton case, saying that Dalton had inadvertently let out a budget secret and, according to tradition, that is something you should not do and that Dalton chose to resign.

The Dalton case is on all fours with the Lalonde case, Mr. Speaker. They both inadvertently—and we will agree it was inadvertent—leaked important contents of their budgets to the press just before a budget speech. The case we refer to of last April is even more grave than the Dalton case, because it occurred over a day before the budget was brought down. In England, the Chancellor of the Exchequer resigned immediately. But in Canada, no, Mr. Speaker, you could not get this Minister of Finance out with a charge of dynamite. You would have to have a very, very stiff charge of dynamite or a major earthquake to move the Minister of Finance from his office in this Government. It would not matter what happened, he has no intention of leaving. What did he do? Instead of offering his resignation, he attempted to weasel out of his dilemma by changing the leaked portions of the budget before he read them to the House on April 19. And this was sanctioned by the Prime Minister, Mr. Speaker.

● (1520)

I have a document here which gives the changes and what was added to the budget. The Minister increased spending by \$200 million for the so-called job creation program, which is still not creating jobs. He increased the size of the deficit by \$200 million over the coming two years. The deficit became \$31.3 billion for 1983. What difference did it make, you might ask yourself, Mr. Speaker? Well, it made this difference. On April 19, the day following this leak, at 10 a.m., the Canadian Dow Jones reported, and I quote:

Dealers said reports of a leak of Finance Minister Marc Lalonde's budget presentation tonight, which allegedly will show an estimated deficit of \$31.2 billion for the current fiscal year, have added to the Canadian fund's weakness. Dealers said the Canadian fund has slipped as low as 80.66 this morning before the Bank of Canada intervened.

That is some of the damage which the budget leak did, Mr. Speaker. It weakened the Canadian dollar the next morning. Even more than that kind of damage, it undermined the confidence of the public in the credibility of the Minister; that is, if it had any such confidence. I, frankly, have never had much confidence in the Minister's credibility. I will say, though, that he is competent. I believe him to be a competent Minister. As to his credibility, the economic record of the Government over the last three or four years and the new energy program of the Minister certainly undermine his credibility. This kind of budget leak, this kind of sneaky and scurrilous behaviour, and this kind of pattern of conduct of sleazebagery by a Minister of Finance certainly does away with any credibility he may have.

The Minister gives a budget speech. He mails it across the country. A document then follows telling the people of the country who just read the budget speech that the special recovery program is not \$4.6 billion, but should be \$4.8 billion. Perhaps we are in 1984 already. Perhaps this is the era of newsmag. You read a budget just produced and printed, then you receive another document from the Minister saying, no, it is not \$4.6 billion, it is \$4.8 billion. It is not a deficit of \$31.2 billion, it is \$31.3 billion. And the changes have all been made overnight.

This is similar, Mr. Speaker, to what happened with reference to the conflict of interest guidelines of the Prime Minister. We all recall during the Gillespie affair how the Prime Minister rationalized what was happening. On April 28, 1980 he sent to every one of his Ministers a letter containing the conflict of interest guidelines which said:

Ministers . . . have an obligation to meet the highest standards of conduct and to arrange and conduct their personal affairs in a manner which does not conflict or appear to conflict with their public duties and responsibilities.

That was the Prime Minister's view in April, 1980. Then, of course, the Gillespie incident came to public light. It was clear that both the Minister of Finance and the now Minister of Energy (Mr. Chrétien) had violated those guidelines. They had ignored them in order to help their friend, Alastair Gillespie—who is now a corporate basket case—who apparently needed the assistance of the Government in the project in Cape Breton.