

## GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

### BORROWING AUTHORITY ACT, 1989-90

#### MEASURE TO ENACT

The House resumed consideration of the motion of Mr. Wilson (Etobicoke Centre) that Bill C-11, an Act to provide borrowing authority, be read the second time and referred to a legislative committee.

**Right Hon. John N. Turner (Leader of the Opposition):** Mr. Speaker, I rise to exercise the right of every Member of Parliament when a borrowing Bill is before the House, to deal with matters of his choice relating to the financial situation of the country. Of course, nothing relates more closely to the necessity of this Government to borrow than the Budget improperly before the House.

This is a Budget of broken promises, a Budget of deceit, and a Budget of economic mismanagement. It is a document which should not now be before this House of Commons.

Canadians have every right to be outraged. Canadians have every right to demand that this Minister of Finance (Mr. Wilson) resign. Look at how this Budget was presented: a day early at a hastily called press conference due to a leak. This was not a leak. This was a flood. The entire Budget was revealed prematurely at the expense of the Canadian people and against the privileges of this House.

Did the Minister of Finance resign? Did he offer to resign? No. Did the Prime Minister (Mr. Mulroney) demand his resignation? No. Instead, in true presidential style, he ignored the responsibility to this House of Commons to uphold and defend the principle of budget secrecy.

What happened was absolutely unprecedented, not only in the history of the country but in the history of parliamentary democracy. The fundamental principle of parliamentary democracy is that the House of Commons, the elected representatives of the people, exercise primacy over all taxation and over all spending. Members of the House of Commons, therefore, must hear the Budget first. Secrecy must be maintained, not only to allow the Members of the House on behalf of the Canadian people to pass judgment on the Budget but to prevent anybody in this country, any Canadian, from obtaining an inside advantage. That principle serves to

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protect the public from those with advance information who could accumulate private gain at the expense of the rest of us.

When he defended his actions in the House of Commons last week, the Minister of Finance acknowledged that principle. This is what he had to say, as reported at page 1005 of *Hansard*:

There are two essential considerations underlying budget secrecy: The need to ensure that a person does not profit or otherwise gain advantage from advance knowledge of the content of the Budget, and the principle that the Government's financial policy should be disclosed to the House of Commons before it is made known to others—

Those were the words of the Minister of Finance. I could not have put it more clearly, nor I doubt could you, Your Honour. Having stated the principle, he then completely absolved himself from all responsibility for adhering to it. He simply said that it was not his fault, nor was it the fault of his Department. Then whose fault was it?

The Prime Minister said that the Minister of Finance was the victim of a crime. There has been no proof of that. We will wait and see, but nobody in this House has been given any evidence of that. I doubt whether it was a crime. Somebody goofed and the Minister is responsible.

When it comes to the Budget, he is the captain of the ship. If there is a leak for whatever reason, he is responsible. If he goes aground for whatever reason, he is responsible. Just like the captain of the *Exxon Valdez*, he has to answer for it whether or not he is on the bridge.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Turner (Vancouver Quadra):** Listen to the vocabulary used by the Prime Minister and his senior Ministers last week. The Prime Minister spoke of "the criminal—who stole the property." The Deputy Prime Minister (Mr. Mazankowski) referred to an "act of sabotage". He referred to the criminal act that occurred. All these citations are from *Hansard*. The Minister of Justice (Mr. Lewis) said, as reported at page 1013 of *Hansard*:

—it became evident to the Government that this was much more than informed speculation. There was in fact a theft of budget material—

The Secretary of State for External Affairs (Mr. Clark) referred to the actions of a thief. The senior Ministers of the Government, led by the Prime Minister, said that it was a fact that the Budget was stolen, but RCMP spokesperson Pierre Belanger said right off the bat: "We are not assuming it is only theft."