

The Budget—Mr. Stevens

remember a budget in which, much to my surprise, it was not reflected in the normal line; it became a footnote. The Government said the financial requirements would be, let us say, \$10 billion, and there was a little footnote which said that in addition there would be another \$2 billion for various Crown corporations.

Last night they went all the way. They just forgot it. It is no place to be seen. When the Minister indicates that the deficit is going to be \$31.2 billion, as he did in his budget, he is omitting to take into account how that might be increased by deficits of various Crown corporations. Some Members may feel I made a mistake when I said \$31.2 billion because, as we know, there was an addendum last night. There was an addendum. Quite negligently, if you like, the Minister of Finance waved his budget around prior to its being delivered yesterday evening. He waved it around in the midst of many press people, including those with TV cameras. As a result, there was a very substantial leak with respect to the budget to be delivered yesterday.

● (1650)

What was the response of this Minister of Finance? Mr. Speaker, I could cite precedents on this type of thing. As an example, a comparable Minister of Finance simply walked into the lobby at Westminster, mentioned to a press man that he should buy a package of cigarettes, and then delivered a budget in which he increased the tax on those cigarettes. A news story ran indicating that there was to be a tax on cigarettes. The following day that Minister felt sufficiently embarrassed to resign, and his Prime Minister accepted that resignation.

Mr. Speaker, that occurred at a time when honour meant something, at a time when a Minister would feel that there are traditions and conventions that a parliamentary democracy must abide by and that must be observed. But what happened last evening? I will ask all Members to note that the Minister, in his budget speech, admitted that he leaked information. It is true that he said in an offhand way that the press should not have done it. But he admits that several pages of his budget speech were filmed.

The Minister's reply is not, "I have made a mistake and must resign". His reply is, "I am going to fudge it. I will within a 24-hour period, pretend that I had always thought that there was another \$100 million and maybe another \$50 million and then another \$50 million that I should be spending, and I am just going to change everything to ensure that that happens." This is where he got caught out, though. He was caught out because he felt that the inclusion of his little addendum was presumably all he had to do.

I can see somebody in the Department of Finance saying, "Yes, but what about all the budgetary papers that you have to table?" So they got some fellow who apparently had a pen to try desperately to make all ink changes in the various tables and pages that had to be filed in order to back up the Minister's cover-up of his leak of the budget to the press.

For those who have not taken the trouble to go to the Table and look at those papers, let me tell you about them. For example, this is page six of the fiscal plan. Look at those ink changes. Does it look as if it came from a Government that has matters under control? Does it look as if it came from a Government which, through its Minister of Finance, can say, "We know exactly what this economy needs. These are the measures I am putting in place. Have confidence in me and my Prime Minister and the Government. I know where I am going"? That looks more as if one of the chickens of my farm had walked all over it. You can hardly read the inked-in portions that are found written over the typed portion, the same portion, incidentally, that the press had an opportunity to see. It has been inked over in order to make it appear as though what the press thought was the budget and what in reality was the budget was in fact not the budget.

That is not where it stops. We find that there are gross errors in what that poor person who was asked to ink in the changes ended up doing. I ask you to look at page 16 of the fiscal plan. You will find there that while the Minister said with a straight face, "Under a thing called the special recovery capital project, I am going to add \$100 million this year, \$50 million next year and \$50 million the year after", in table 2.3 something went wrong, only \$40 million was added for next year. Who is right? Was the Minister simply caught off guard? Is the error going to be rectified?

In response to a question put by myself to the Minister today, the Minister said, "If there are corrections to be made, I would be pleased if the Member would send me over a photostat of his changes, and if things are wrong, I will surely correct them".

Mr. Speaker, I do not mind helping this Minister out. God knows he needs the help. Would it not be much better, though, if the whole bunch of them were swept out of power and somebody took over who knows how to run the financial affairs of Canada?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Stevens: The Minister negligently leaked a substantial part of his budget, in fact, as far as bond markets are concerned, almost a crucial part of his budget. That was the question of how big the deficit is going to be. A Minister who has erred so grossly that he must now be corrected almost page by page because of his errors in tabling a document in the House is surely not someone on whom Canada's world confidence will be built upon.

Just let me take you a little further, Mr. Speaker. Leaf over to page 41. You will find that the deficit is recorded at \$28.2 billion for fiscal 1984, \$24.7 billion in 1985, and \$20.6 billion in 1986. Every one of those figures is wrong. If they are not right, then I must say that the budget is also wrong.

In short, the Minister, between his left-handed budget and his right-handed delivery of these documents to the Table, does not know what each hand has done.