

Tough-talking MP made PM quiver

Don Blenkarn was an outspoken and colourful MP who represented Mississauga South in the federal Legislature for 16 years.

He was best known as the longtime chair of the federal finance committee and as a tough-talking, hard-working entrepreneur who understood the nuts and bolts of federal tax law better than many of the staff who worked for the committee.



Don
Blenkarn

Blenkarn, also a highly successful lawyer and businessman who ran financial and mortgage

Obituary

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companies, died Monday. He was 81.

Although he would dearly have loved to be the minister of finance, Blenkarn's candid nature kept him constantly in the headlines during his tenure in Ottawa — and constantly in trouble with his Conservative Party masters.

A self-made man who was running his own company cutting lawns in Port Credit as a teenager, Blenkarn also owned a very successful toy company for many years.

His penchant for controversial statements made him a gold mine to political cartoonists, as he was regularly lampooned on editorial pages across the country.

His comments about Aboriginal Peoples once prompted a door-to-door campaign against him in a federal election by a national native group.

On a tour of Western Canada promoting the federal goods and services tax, Blenkarn said "I've never seen so much stupidity in my whole life" and suggested "I guess we ought to send a bunch of Grade 5 teachers out here."

Former prime minister Brian Mulroney met with Blenkarn as a result of those remarks.

A headline in *The Toronto Star* about the voluble MP in 1989 stated, "When Blenkarn speaks, even Mulroney quivers."

Funeral arrangements for Blenkarn have not been finalized.