

board was to identify problems. He responded by saying no. One must ask what was the purpose of this panel of 20 reviewing the documents of the tax reform if the Minister of Finance had no intention whatsoever of changing his mind on any of the aspects of the tax reform proposal.

It is obvious that these people now have privileged information and they will be in a position to take advantage of that privileged information on behalf of their corporate clients.

Mr. Turner (Vancouver Quadra): A 24-hour head start.

Mr. Riis: As the Leader of the Official Opposition has indicated, they will have a 24-hour head start. The fact that the statement will be made after market hours and the fact that there is an extensive lockup involved indicates that this is very important information and those people who are able to take advantage of this information of course stand to gain substantially.

I believe that this is in fact an infringement on the privileges of Members of Parliament. It is perfectly clear that it has always been the tradition in Canada that the first people to view the final documents after the Minister of Finance has put his final stamp on them are the duly elected representatives of the people of Canada. That a handful of politically chosen elite tax advisers have been given preliminary information and know exactly what the new tax Act will be 24 hours prior to Members of Parliament having an opportunity to be apprised of it is obviously an infringement on the privileges of Members of Parliament.

Hon. Michael Wilson (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, I have listened very carefully to the arguments of Members opposite and I think I should draw to the attention of Hon. Members just exactly what we are discussing here. We are discussing the lead-up to a White Paper, we are not discussing a Budget. It is a White Paper and a White Paper is a proposal. It does not represent Budget policy. I believe that is a fundamental point that must be made here.

Some Hon. Members: Why the Ways and Means Motion?

Mr. Wilson (Etobicoke Centre): The Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Turner) has said that under no circumstances should this information be made available to anyone prior to the time it is presented in the House of Commons. The Hon. Leader of the Opposition knows that there are Members of Parliament who are privy to this information prior to my rising in the House of Commons. Members of the Press Gallery are also privy to information—

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Speaker: The matter that has been raised by the Right Hon. Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Turner) is a serious one. The Hon. Member for Kamloops—Shuswap (Mr. Riis) has taken the same position. The Chair is listening to argument on a matter which all Hon. Members know is a serious one and I must say that it is easier for the Chair to pay attention to the

arguments that are being made if Hon. Members would refrain from arguing with each other across the floor.

• (1520)

I noted that when the Right Hon. Leader of the Opposition was giving his precise and cogent arguments he was received with respectful silence. I ask that all Hon. Members give the Minister the same courtesy when he is responding.

If Hon. Members have something to add in opposition to what the Minister is saying or may say, they know the Chair tends to be generous and always tries to be gracious in making sure those points of view are heard. I will recognize Hon. Members if it is appropriate to do so.

Mr. Wilson (Etobicoke Centre): Mr. Speaker, I very much appreciate your comments.

I believe when I was interrupted by Members opposite I was talking about the fact that there are people who are given information prior to my standing up in the House tomorrow evening. That is understood. We all understand the importance of helping Members of Parliament and members of the media make themselves knowledgeable about what is in the White Paper.

I want to make this point in the context of the discussion paper of May, 1985, called the *Canadian Budgetary Process, Proposals for Improvement*. This was a continuation of a Department of Finance paper put out in 1982. The comment was made in the 1982 paper and quoted again in the 1985 paper that when a political controversy might be precipitated by a budget leak, however trivial it might be and regardless of how it occurs, meaningful pre-budget consultations are naturally inhibited. Budget secrecy impedes consultation when it prevents groups from knowing which options the Government has under serious consideration.

What we are trying to do with this process is take advice from knowledgeable people in advance of making the final decision so we can get the benefit of their technical ability, using them as a sounding board so we are not making budgetary policy in a vacuum. As I said, that process was started many years ago. After the Right Hon. Leader of the Opposition took exception to the fact that I said technical advisors were advising the department during his term of office as Minister of Finance, I checked and, yes, that is true. The same types of advisors were providing advice to officials in the Department of Finance at that time.

There is nothing new here. These people take the same oath of secrecy as do members of the Public Service. They are then given a range of things under consideration by department officials. They are asked to give their advice as to what problems or technical questions there might be in certain elements of the proposals being considered. They are asked for their opinion and they continue on through the process. This has been going on for the better part of six or eight months.