

Privilege

Of greatest concern is that this time the Department of Finance employed this campaign after you, Mr. Speaker, had issued your warning to them. I ask you to consider what precedent will be set if a *prima facie* case of contempt is not found in this instance. What will it take to convince those who continue to act in defiance in Parliament that indeed the House of Commons does have an authority which must be protected?

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, if you find that there is a *prima facie* case of contempt in this instance I would, of course, be prepared to move the appropriate motion.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Minister of Justice in reply.

Hon. Doug Lewis (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada): Mr. Speaker, I have a few short points to make on my friend's point of order. I am amazed to find, once again, that the New Democratic Party objects to the Canadian people being informed. We on this side always thought that it was the job of governments and of Parliament to inform people. The NDP seems to operate on the theory that if you keep people in the dark and cover them up they will not create any problems.

I will be very brief, Mr. Speaker. The essence of your ruling, as I understand it, was that in the advertisement in question back in the fall there was an inference that the goods and services tax had become law. We took to heart the ruling which the Chair made. I can assure the Chair that all advertisements and all informational material has been prepared with that ruling in mind, and there is no intention of misinforming the Canadian people. Rather we intend to inform Canadians with as much information as possible.

I found when I was in my riding over Christmas that that was what people wanted. They want to know how we are going to implement this tax; how do barbers implement it, how do farmers implement it, how do business people implement this new tax. There is an understanding out there that the tax must happen in order to improve our competitive ability.

I hear my friends in the Liberal Party agree. Having said that, Mr. Speaker, I am content that you will find that all information produced by the Ministry of Finance is in order and is in keeping with your previous ruling.

I wish, while I am on my feet, to respond to my hon. member's comments *vis-a-vis* debate. I am pleased to welcome the New Democratic Party to the House of Commons for debate rather than delay. We have a litany which is prepared and will go forward from my office advising the people of exactly the delaying tactics of the New Democratic Party. I am joined by my colleagues in the Liberal Party in welcoming the New Democratic Party to a forum for debate rather than delay.

Under the circumstances of this refreshing new attitude on behalf of the New Democratic Party I want to advise the House that, in view of this change of heart on behalf of the New Democrats, the government has no intention of delaying debate. The government will call Bill C-62 today. The government will not invoke closure today. There will be no need for any further points of order on whether the notice given yesterday was in order. We have a very routine Routine Proceedings as far as the government is concerned. We welcome and enjoin the New Democratic Party to participate in debate.

Mr. Peter Milliken (Kingston and the Islands): Mr. Speaker, I rise on the question of privilege that has been raised. I know hon. members opposite do not like to hear these words. They are embarrassed about the booklets they are distributing about the country on this goods and services tax, and with good reason.

I must say at the outset that I am delighted to receive support from the New Democratic Party for our leader's initiative taken last September on this important issue. We know that the privileges of Parliament are paramount because we in this party take the view that those privileges represent the privileges of the people who elected us to represent them here, and trampling on these privileges by this government has become quite notorious in the last few years. Frankly, the books that have been published recently, I am sure, are a continuation of the same kind of exercise.

I am delighted to hear the Minister of Justice say that the booklets have been prepared in accordance with Your Honour's ruling. However, I think the point raised by the hon. member for Kamloops is a valid one. While these booklets may, on their face, appear to comply with Your Honour's ruling in that they may state that the bill introducing the goods and services tax is currently before Parliament, I want to stress that the booklets are not just factual booklets, but contain information. And more