

*Privilege*

ads condemning the House of Commons, condemning the decision made by the duly elected members in the House?

I think we would agree as parliamentarians that that would not be appropriate. It would not be an appropriate use of the authority given to the minister. It would not be an appropriate use of taxpayers' funds allotted to that department. Have we not had exactly the same situation occur here? The ad in itself, as others have pointed out, indicates that there will be a tax change. There is no question about that, if you look at the ad.

Recognizing that this ad was taken out by the Department of Finance, presumably with the authorization of the Minister of Finance, it points out a number of items. It points out that the federal sales tax has been pushed beyond its limits. Therein lies the criticism, that, presumably, this ad is suggesting that the House of Commons, in its wisdom, in terms of amending the tax legislation, has increased the tax system, in this case the federal manufacturers' tax, to such an extent that it has been pushed beyond its limits, that it becomes meaningless, that it is not functioning appropriately. Is that, then, not a question about the decision-making of this House? While we in the House would disagree, when the decision is made, when the vote is taken, and time after time when the government has increased the manufacturers' sales tax—and since 1984, it has increased it four and a half percentage points to 13.5 per cent—that was, whether we in the opposition liked that initiative or not, a decision of this House.

Here we have the Minister of Finance criticizing that decision. We have the Minister of Finance, as a result of this ad with the support of the Finance Department, saying that that decision was wrong-headed, that that decision was a bad one, an inappropriate decision.

We go on in this advertisement. It comments on the tax system as being structurally weak. The House of Commons, over the years, has determined what kind of tax system we have. Is it the right, then, of the Minister of Finance, after he or she has been a part of that decision-making, to condemn the decisions taken by that government, by using taxpayers' money in terms of a propaganda machine to achieve another agenda item.

He goes on in this advertisement to suggest that the tax system is unpredictable and unreliable. Again, what he is doing is criticizing the decisions of his government. He is criticizing the decisions taken by this House. I suspect, Mr. Speaker, that while many of us may agree that the decision itself was that this is the tax system we have, here we have the Minister of Finance condemning the decisions of the House of Commons, and using taxpayers' money on top of that.

I think we all agree that if a particular political party wishes to launch an advertising campaign to promote a certain idea, they have a right to do that. I think it is perfectly clear, if the Conservative Party of Canada, who presumably wanted to introduce this tax, and if that is part of their political agenda, then they should be using party funds to promote this idea. But that did not occur, Mr. Speaker. That is why we believe that there has been an act towards contempt of this Parliament.

• (1240)

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

**Mr. Riis:** In a previous decision on this matter Speaker Sauvé in her explanation of her decision pointed out that for her to find a *prima facie* case of privilege it would only exist if there was a publication of false material. Now, Mr. Speaker, there is no question that that has been the case, on two counts.

First, it is impossible at this point for the government to say that there will be a tax change. The government has no right to suggest that until the documentation has been properly introduced in the House of Commons. I want to refer specifically to some items that have not yet been introduced.

We recognize that our fundamental right as a House is to grant money and to impose taxes. This right, Mr. Speaker, as you are well aware, is the prize of centuries of struggle and even wars against monarchs and governors. In Canada, this important democratic right and privilege has been cemented right into our Constitution. The Constitutional Act of 1867 reads under section 53:

Bills for appropriating any Part of the Public Revenue, or for imposing any Tax or Impost, shall originate in the House of Commons.