

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Wednesday, March 10, 1971

The House met at 2 p.m.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

PRESENCE IN GALLERY OF MAZOWSZE FOLK DANCE
AND SONG ENSEMBLE

Mr. Stanley Haidasz (Parkdale): Mr. Speaker, with the consent of the House I rise to bring to your attention the presence in the ladies' gallery of ambassadors of Polish culture, the Mazowsze Folk Dance and Song Ensemble, who are visiting us in our national capital today.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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PRIVILEGE

MR. LAMBERT (EDMONTON WEST)—STATEMENT BY MINISTER OF FINANCE ON WHITE PAPER ON TAX REFORM AS BASIS FOR LEGISLATION

Hon. Marcel Lambert (Edmonton West): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 17(2) I gave you notice of my request to raise a question of privilege at the opening of today's proceedings arising out of a statement attributed to the Minister of Finance (Mr. Benson) at a meeting last night of the Kingston Junior Chamber of Commerce. The minister is reported to have said:

—and I've been asked by people "when are you going to legislate the white paper on taxation" and the simple answer to that is never.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Lambert (Edmonton West): Apparently there was loud cheering and clapping at that meeting. My question of privilege is that the minister has made a statement of policy of the greatest importance outside the House, which is not subject to direct comment, on a matter on which he has rejected giving forthright answers in the House and, because of the equivocal nature of the statement, has created further confusion and doubt in the House and in the country on the subject of proposed tax reform.

I therefore move, seconded by the hon. member for Halifax-East Hants (Mr. McCleave):

That a transcript of all of the remarks of the Minister of Finance to the Kingston Junior Chamber of Commerce on Tuesday, March 9, 1971, be referred to the Standing Committee on Finance, Trade and Economic Affairs, and that the Minister of Finance be invited to appear before the said committee to explain his remarks concerning the implementation or rejection of the white paper on tax changes, and to indicate clearly both

the timing and the method to be used for any tax changes so as to remove the doubt and confusion now existing in Canada about the government's tax policy, which contribute in large measure to the present economic recession in the country.

• (2:10 p.m.)

[Translation]

Mr. Speaker: The hon. member for Edmonton West (Mr. Lambert) has given notice to the Chair of his intention to rise on a question of privilege in the sense that he has just indicated.

The hon. member knows that the Chair must determine whether there is a prima facie case of privilege. After having considered the situation as carefully as possible, I must conclude that the circumstances are not such that the Chair could ask the House to consider the motion of the hon. member for Edmonton West.

[English]

Hon. members know that on many occasions in the past it has been suggested that it was tantamount to a breach of the privileges of the House when a ministerial statement of policy is made outside the House. I suggest to hon. members that this is a practice which has been adopted over a long period of years. Although hon. members may feel that this gives rise to a grievance, and thus some hon. members might be dissatisfied with such procedure and they may want to suggest that such statements should more properly be made in the House rather than outside. With respect, I suggest to the hon. member for Edmonton West that it cannot be judged that there is a prima facie case of privilege. In the circumstances I cannot put to the House the motion proposed by the hon. member for Edmonton West.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

SUPPLEMENTARY ESTIMATES (C), 1970-71

REFERENCE TO STANDING COMMITTEES—RULING ON POINT OF ORDER

Mr. Speaker: Perhaps at this point I might refer to the motion offered by the President of the Privy Council on Monday and indicate the conclusion I have reached after giving the matter much thought.

On Monday last, when the President of the Privy Council offered a motion under the provisions of Standing Order 59 to send supplementary estimates to certain standing committees, the hon. member for Winnipeg