

Alleged Tax Reform Propaganda

Mr. Benson:—one which does not provide Members of Parliament on both sides of the House with information so that there may be a reasonable discussion of the issues before a decision is made.

I have heard a great deal from the hon. member and from other members of his party about the press conferences which were held before budgets were produced in the House. On this occasion, for the first time in Canada's history, we agreed to brief members of his party and, indeed, members on both sides of the House on the proposals which are being made to change taxes basically in this country. We have put forward proposals which have been placed before the Canadian people not as a *fait accompli* but rather as an approach to tax reform. We have asked for comment from the opposition and from the people of Canada—

Mr. Horner: Let us look at the amendments, too.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The Minister of Finance has the floor and he should be given an opportunity to make his argument.

Mr. Benson: The hon. member says: "Let us look at the amendments, too." Well, if he can bring forward some reasonable amendments to these propositions, we have stated—

Mr. Horner: You show us yours.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. I should bring it to the notice of the House that we are not now discussing the white paper. The hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre raised a question of privilege and the Chair will have to decide in due course whether there is a *prima facie* case. Hon. members who wish to take part in this interesting debate should limit their contributions to the aspect of privilege.

Mr. Benson: All I can say, and I shall do it briefly, is this: if hon. members opposite think it is a breach of the privileges of this House to bring forward proposals for tax reform in a white paper, or if they object to a white paper, if they are objecting to these slides which are purely informative and contain no propaganda—

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Benson:—if they are against informing the Canadian people about the proposals in

the mind of the government before decisions are reached in the House, then perhaps there is a question of privilege and we should discuss the matter in the committee.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Hon. Marcel Lambert (Edmonton West): We have just heard an eloquent exhortation by the Minister of Finance—

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Lambert (Edmonton West):—who seems to be blinded by the justice of his own case. The complaint does not concern the white paper. The Minister of Finance has unfortunately lost sight of the essence of this communication and what he is trying to do.

Mr. Benson: It could have been in the white paper.

Mr. Lambert (Edmonton West): If the minister can do it in the case of this legislation, then every one of his colleagues could do the same.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Lambert (Edmonton West): They could take selective extracts, produce them extensively and seek to propagandize them through Members of Parliament.

We find in this letter to the Leader of the Opposition what amounts almost to the offer of a bargain from the basement. The minister says in effect in his letter: I am sorry I have not got any English copies; here is a French copy as a sample.

● (2:20 p.m.)

Mr. Aiken: One of the leftovers.

Mr. Lambert (Edmonton West): Yes, a leftover. We are wondering where the English copies went to; obviously somebody else got them.

I discussed this matter with the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre before he rose this afternoon, and I too should like to know precisely why this administration has used, as was indicated, public funds to put forward its own case. I recall that a similar thing was done with regard to the Canada Pension Plan, but after the plan had been adopted. Some very informative booklets were distributed at public expense to explain to the people just what had been adopted, and I think those