

Privilege

The House of Commons has not considered any bill on the goods and services tax. The Department of Finance which placed these ads is responsible for drafting any such bill. The Minister of Finance, who is responsible for introducing the bill, is the same minister who is responsible for allowing the ads to be placed, knowing that no legislation has been drafted, knowing that no legislation has been presented, knowing that the committee of finance under the chairmanship of the member for Mississauga South is seeking the opinions of Canadians. All of that is a flagrant contempt of the House of Commons.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Turner (Vancouver Centre): As manipulative as it would have been for the Minister of Finance to place ads stating what he would recommend to Parliament, that is not what he did. He went one step further. He allowed ads to be placed which indicated in specific terms that his recommendations had already become law. As misleading as it would have been for the minister to place ads stating that the tax system would change in some way or other, that is not what he did. He placed ads saying that the tax system would change in a specific manner, and in the ad he lists proposed changes in specific terms, pre-empting the work of the House of Commons, pre-empting the role of members of Parliament.

Now, the minister cannot claim that the ads merely provide information to the Canadian public about his proposals because, according to the ads, it is not a proposal, this is law. "On January 1, 1991, Canada's federal sales tax system will change," and he lists the specific changes. And, "Please, save this notice," because nothing is going to change, nothing that members of Parliament can say, nothing that Canadians can say, nothing is going to change, so please, save this notice.

The minister cannot claim that he is merely giving notice to the Canadian people of future tax changes. The Standing Committee on Finance, acting on Standing Order 108 (2) of this House is conducting hearings to advise the minister whether he should draft legislation on any goods and services tax. Until such time as he hears from the committee, the Minister of Finance is not in a position to give any detailed notice unless he is

willing to admit contempt for the very House of Commons committee set up to advise him.

In our submission to you, Mr. Speaker, misrepresentations contained in the ads prejudice in a fundamental way the proceedings of this House of Commons. We have offered to you detailed precedents on the question of privilege. My colleagues will offer parliamentary analysis of the specifics contained in these newspaper advertisements. I put before you and submit to you, Your Honour, that this is a significant question of privilege covering the issue of contempt, under which it has always been placed. If you find a *prima facie* case, I am prepared to move the appropriate motion.

Now, you do not need a precedent on the issue of contempt, but I attempted to outline for you earlier parallel proceedings which support our claim. Again, I am prepared to submit the appropriate motion, if you should so find.

Thank you for your indulgence and for the indulgence of the House. Nothing is more fundamental than for members to stand on their feet to defend the issue of privilege of the House, because only when we do it on behalf of the Canadian people can governments be held to account. This type of presidential largesse, this type of contemptuous treatment of the people's representatives on the fundamental issue of Parliament, the issue of taxation, the foundation of Parliament, cannot be tolerated by you, Sir, or by any of us who sit in this Chamber.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Broadbent: Mr. Speaker, I have in my hand a copy of an ad that appeared in newspapers across the country in the middle of the summer. It says, and I quote:

On January 1, 1991, Canada's federal sales tax system will change.

That is misleading, it is false, it is wrong and above all, in a democratic parliamentary system, it is contempt of Parliament and contempt of the people of Canada. That is what that ad is all about.

The people who put that ad in newspapers from one coast to the other are precisely the same people who, when they were on this side of the House, accurately pointed out that parliamentary tradition, if it means anything, means that a government of the day cannot use the funds of the people of Canada to advocate public