

Privilege—Mr. Clark

considering questions and had not decided them before the House of Commons. That would become a new method of keeping this Parliament from operating at all, although I must admit the opposition has been pretty effective in the last few days in keeping it from operating and moving ahead by bringing up these various issues.

Some hon. Members: Right on.

An hon. Member: Filibuster.

Mr. Fleming: I tried to make it very clear that I saw phase one of the constitutional advertising, as discussed during the question of privilege brought up last week, as indeed being something different from what had happened in the past. It was creating an awareness. I admitted that, and I tried to give a parameter for the circumstances in which I thought that was appropriate, and that led to considerable debate. But the ads which the Right Hon. Leader of the Opposition mentioned yesterday and now discusses, are fundamental, and are part of an ongoing practice under which, I believe, his government operated, in philosophy at least.

Mr. Clark: That is not true.

Mr. Fleming: He says it is not true. He will have his opportunity to speak. I must say, Madam Speaker, I found, and anybody who is a regular reader of *Hansard* will find, given the Right Hon. Leader of the Opposition's proximity to the *Hansard* reporters, there is a constancy in his demeaning comments to members on this side of the House. Heckling is a healthy part of this institution, but if somebody looks through *Hansard* they will find a regularity in those demeaning comments. I do not think that, with his position and the position he held in the past, he has to carry on in that way. He would gain for himself and for his office more respect if he were to listen and then participate in the debate, as he can.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Fleming: The Right Hon. Leader of the Opposition, in an interview on the CBC Sunday morning program, when speaking about how long he thought the debate should go on before reference and how he felt about the position of the government, said:

We are speaking four days into the debate, a week after the Prime Minister dropped his surprise on the people of Canada. I think it would be surprising if there were a wide number of Canadians who yet had a chance to read the bill, read the resolution. I hope they will. I think it is very early yet to suggest what is happening in public opinion, in public support.

All those newspaper ads do is say, "Do you want to read about it? Here is the information." Surely that is the responsibility—

Mr. Clark: That is not true.

Mr. Fleming: Again I am being interrupted. If the right hon. member wishes to get up, he can do so if he wants to.

Madam Speaker: I do not know who has precedence, the Speaker or the Right Hon. Leader of the Opposition, but I just

want to caution the minister not to comment on the ruling that I had made. We are not speaking of that here. We are speaking of a document published by the government. I would be grateful if the minister would concentrate on discussing that matter. Does the Right Hon. Leader of the Opposition have a point of order?

Mr. Clark: Yes, a very brief point of order, Madam Speaker. The minister has taken exception to my interventions. My interventions have been to point out the falsity of his statements. If he will stop making false statements, I will stop intervening.

An hon. Member: That is not an intervention, it is heckling.

Mr. Fleming: Madam Speaker, later I will look at the record because I believe that the Right Hon. Leader of the Opposition, by use of a synonym, has said that I have been lying to the House. Another hon. member has just said that that is right. I believe that is in contravention of the rules, but let me continue.

I am sorry, Madam Speaker, I certainly had no intention of reflecting on your decision. I was attempting to answer the first point made by the Right Hon. Leader of the Opposition in which he said that a series of ads published in the last few days were in contravention of your consideration of the question on which you ruled, and I am trying to make the point that they are not, they simply bring to the attention of the Canadian public information that is available. They take no role, make no advocacy, and are most straightforward.

The second point I should like to discuss which was brought up by the Right Hon. Leader of the Opposition is the issue of the content itself. In the simplest terms—because I believe the government House leader dealt with that matter very capably—I should like to point out that if we are going to have, as questions of privilege, debates over the content of materials as summed up by governments, then it is a very shallow argument indeed for the Right Hon. Leader of the Opposition to make because I could read from beginning to end the budget in the brief document which his government put out last December 11 and made exactly the same kind of argument about what was appropriate, what was misleading, what was true, what I thought was correct, and what was not telling the facts to the Canadian public.

What we are really having here, I believe, is a continuing effort to pull a blind over the real constitutional debate, and to delay Parliament.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Madam Speaker: I have heard a series of arguments on both sides. The document in question has been read and the Chair would like to look at the document to see whether the arguments contained in the interventions of the various members do lead to my finding of a *prima facie* case of privilege. I will take the question of privilege under advisement.