

PRIVILEGE

COMMENTS BY MINISTER

Mr. John Manley (Ottawa South): Mr. Speaker, I gave notice yesterday to the Chair of my intention to raise a question of privilege arising from a series of questions and answers given in the House last week with respect to the proposals of the government to apply a special tax to old age pensions and to family allowance benefits under Bill C-28.

If I might very quickly refer to that series of questions and answers, I think the question of privilege will become apparent. I should also advise the Chair that my intention to raise this matter was indicated to the office of the Minister of State for Privatization yesterday afternoon as well.

The first question and answer occurred on Tuesday, December 5, 1989, in a question directed to the Minister of Finance concerning the clawback tax. He responded by quoting from a document given to him in February 1989 by One Voice, which is a group representative of seniors in Canada. He quoted from that document at page 6509 of *Hansard*.

The context of his quotation indicated that the One Voice seniors network supported the proposed clawback measure, and in response to that implication from the quotation One Voice issued a press release on December 6, 1989, in which they stated that the Minister of Finance had "twisted their words", to use the wording of the press release, and I quote from it:

Mr. Wilson invited us to consult on the budget while it was in preparation. At that meeting he specifically promised us he would not touch social programs but then he went ahead and proposed this awful clawback. That was a real betrayal. But now he is taking our own words out of the context of our brief to make it look as though we agree with the clawback. This simply is not what we said. Mr. Wilson has aggravated the anger and mistrust seniors are already feeling.

In light of that press release I raised the question in Question Period on December 7. In the absence of the Minister of Finance, the Minister of State for Privatization and Regulatory Affairs rose to reply to the question. He said at page 6615 of *Hansard*, and I quote:

In the pre-budget consultations which the Minister of Finance had with various interested groups, Mrs. Woodsworth was there.

Privilege

Mrs. Woodsworth being the president of One Voice. The quotation continues:

And I want to quote exactly what she said as part of the presentation that was made to the Minister of Finance. She said, "We agree with the Economic Council that people with over \$50,000 of income should have their OAS taxed back."

He went on in answering a supplementary to that question, again at page 6615 of *Hansard*, and I quote:

It is very plain exactly what Mrs. Woodsworth who was representing that group said. She said it and I will read it to you again. I will do so slowly, "We agree with the Economic Council that people with over \$50,000 of income should have their OAS taxed back."

I might note that there was a touch of sarcasm at the time that that second quotation was read.

This matter was raised on a point of order as you will recall, Mr. Speaker, on Friday when I asked that the minister table the document from which he was reading. He said, and I quote, on page 6671 of *Hansard*:

I was not quoting from a document yesterday. I was quoting from one-page notes that I had in front of me.

He therefore refused to table anything.

On December 11, the One Voice, the Canadian seniors' network—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The member raises a question of privilege which the member obviously has a right to do. The Chair would like to know as soon as possible where the member believes his own privileges have been breached. What the member has raised may be an important matter for the member and may be a question of debate, but so far I must indicate to the member that I do not see at all how the member's privileges have been breached. Could the member please address that question?

Mr. Manley: Yes, Mr. Speaker. I am concerned very much with the privileges of the House. I think these become apparent.

There are two issues of privilege here. The first emerges clearly in the letter from One Voice to the minister dated December 11. I will quote from that letter:

"During Question Period on December 7, 1989 you made reference to a pre-budget consultation meeting between representatives of One Voice and other national seniors' organizations and the Hon. Michael Wilson,