

*Privilege*

advertisements as to proposed changes or he does not. What we have to do is decide that.

In the interest of exposing this issue to the House and enabling you, Sir, to make your decision, I would point out that on March 16, 1988 there was a report of the finance committee which recommended unanimously that if the government were to proceed with a value added tax it should publicize the details of that tax and the relevant social policy transfers.

It is hard to say who was the finance critic for the Liberal Party at that time, just as it is today. In any event, that committee when it reported said to publicize the details, so we are taking that unanimous recommendation and we are publicizing the details. I think that is in the interest of what we are trying to do.

Great comment has been made here today that the House has never made any decision on whether or not to go ahead with the goods and services tax. I realize that the opposition was distracted last spring. Last spring we brought in a budget and the opposition was distracted for about six weeks or eight weeks. How long was it? They completely missed the fact that in that budget there was a goods and services tax. I am sorry that they missed that. The quotes in there are: "These measures will be replaced by the new sales tax to be implemented on January 1, 1991".

I would also refer my hon. friend to the fact that on May 15 of this year the House approved in general, and I quote, "the budgetary policy of the government". The goods and services tax is included in the budgetary policy of the government and therefore has been approved by the House.

I know that my friends will not be persuaded by that political argument, so let me move quickly to the procedural argument. This is a political argument and I do not have any difficulty with that. We will make the political argument. We are making it in committee, we are making it in the House, and we are making it in the country. Let us look at what the well-known experts say about parliamentary privilege, and I shall read from Erskine May, page 143, where it states:

It may be stated generally that any act or omission which obstructs or impedes either House of Parliament in the performance of its functions, or which obstructs or impedes any Member or officer of such House in the discharge of his duty, or which has a tendency, directly or indirectly, to produce such results may be treated as contempt even though there is no precedent of the offence.

The committee is sitting. The debate is going on. Nobody is impeded. Nobody yet in this debate has suggested to you, Mr. Speaker, they are impeded from doing what they should do as members of parliament.

The same point is made also in *Abraham and Hawtrey* on page 80. It has to impede the member and the member's abilities.

Let us talk about advertisements. We are fortunate in this to be able to produce some comments from a well-known Canadian presently listed as a three to two favourite, the Hon. Jean Chrétien. I know that members of the House who are at five to one, ten to one, and twenty-five to one, the hon. members for Hamilton East and Gloucester, will be interested in these comments. This is not post time. Post time is on a weekend in June, but that is where they are.

Let us deal with what Mr. Chrétien said. He said that it was the goal that the House of Commons was pursuing at that time in order to have constitutional reform come quickly and effectively to Canada. He said: "I do not think that the privileges of the members have been affected". He is referring, of course, to an advertising campaign put on at the time by the government of the day to promote constitutional reform just as we are promoting tax reform. That was defended vigorously—and I notice he stepped out for a minute—by the present member for Welland—St. Catharines—Thorold. He said, and these are great words: "There is a need to achieve understanding of Canada's evolution, the integrity of the federal system of the Government." This is on page 16839 for my colleagues who will want to read those citations in full. I have other citations, but I want to close.

• (1210)

My colleagues made great reference to the arguments that we made in opposition. I want to close with the ruling of the Speaker of the day. Let us get to the issue of advertising in advance of a parliamentary decision was