

Is he saying that Your Honour should rule the process invalid due to a reference in a Ways and Means motion that was put there to provide context and information in relation to an exhaustive and detailed public examination of a government proposal? How can the bill that we introduced be declared invalid simply by what has happened here in the past couple of days?

• (1520)

We do not believe that in any way any changes to the Ways and Means motion would affect one comma of this bill. Taxation bills are based on, and not identical to, Ways and Means motions. We would ask if this House is now to swallow itself by giving weight to documents issued, tabled or whatever during a five-year process of study by the public, the government or the committees of this House.

Is the member seriously suggesting that somehow overnight the Ways and Means process now must include technical papers as a formal and interpretative part of the process that will extend or restrict the scope of whatever bill it is that the government is planning on proceeding with? Surely not. The Ways and Means is the first step in the process of bringing forward a taxation measure. That is pure and it is simple.

I am not sure what this game of procedural brinkmanship is all about but I suspect it has more to do with simply stalling a measure that he and his party do not support and it really begs the question, "Whatever has happened to the old-fashioned way of getting at issues called debate?"

Having said that I believe this whole process is frivolous, I do want to, for the future, put a few thoughts on the record. I emphasize again, for the future, should a question on another Ways and Means motion come up at another time.

The member has stated that the whole process of the Ways and Means tabling, concurrence and, finally, the GST's introduction is invalid because the August 8, 1989 technical paper referred to in the GST Ways and Means was not tabled when released by the minister, and further, that this government is somehow embarking on a new procedure of basing finance bills on technical papers that have or have not been tabled in this House.

Points of Order

This is simply not the case. The August 8, 1989 technical paper was not tabled at the time of its release simply because the House was not sitting in August. The Ways and Means motion states that the August technical paper was issued and not tabled. Documents for which no statutory requirement for tabling exist do not have to be tabled.

Standing Order 32 deals with documents that should be tabled and I quote Standing Order 32(1):

Any return, report or other paper required to be laid before the House in accordance with any Act of Parliament or in pursuance of any resolution or Standing Order of this House may be deposited with the Clerk of the House on any sitting day, and such return, report or other paper shall be deemed for all purposes to have been presented to or laid before the House.

Standing Order 32(2) says:

A Minister of the Crown, or a Parliamentary Secretary acting on behalf of a Minister, may, in his or her place in the House, state that he or she proposes to lay upon the Table of the House, any report or other paper dealing with a matter coming within the administrative responsibilities of the government, and, thereupon, the same shall be deemed for all purposes to have been laid before the House.

If documents are tabled for which no statutory requirement exists, it is simply because the minister wishes to do so as a courtesy so that the public and Parliament can be informed of government initiatives. This August 8 technical paper, while not tabled, was in fact distributed to all members of Parliament following its release and was in fact the only document released by the Department of Finance on August 8, 1989, as was stated in the Ways and Means motion relating to the GST.

What could be more specific than that? How could the member end up still being confused? The hon. member is trying to give formal parliamentary weight to a document which, all along, was meant only to inform the public as part of the government's ongoing process of consultation and information. In short, the minister is being taken to task on the floor of the House of Commons because he was being helpful in providing context to where the Ways and Means emanated from.

I think if we go through all of the documents, the Ways and Means motions, it becomes very clear that everything that was done in this five-year process is a consistent step-by-step process. The Ways and Means motion refers to a 7 per cent GST. It does not pick up a