

the motion of the hon. member for St. John's East (Mr. McGrath), you have to be convinced that there is before you a prima facie case of privilege. I contend that there is, and I shall try to make that point.

May I say initially that I, personally, am not as offended by the advertising as are my friends in the Progressive Conservative Party. I think some of them are a waste of money. I believe that commercials for some products are funnier and more interesting to watch. I disagree with many of the things my friends in the official opposition are saying about the possible effect of these advertisements, but somebody has to come to the defence of the official opposition. Whether I agree with them or not, I do so.

I point out to Your Honour that you are not being asked to decide that there has been an act of wrongdoing. You are not even being asked to decide that the matter is to go to a committee. All you are being asked is to decide that there is sufficient prima facie evidence about the question of privilege to permit the motion to be put so that the House can decide whether the matter is to go to the Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections.

I suggest to Your Honour that the very debate that is taking place here this afternoon, no matter which side one takes, demonstrates the fact that those on the government side have available taxpayers' money to present their case to the people of Canada, whereas those on the opposition side do not have that facility. They do not have available to them taxpayers' money to make their point. I may not agree with the point of view of my friends to the right, but they have the right to make it.

We have some other views about the constitution, but no taxpayers' money is made available to us. We have to pay for these things out of our party funds if we wish to do so, or we have to content ourselves with argument on the floor of the House of Commons or at other public gatherings. However, the government of the day, and because it is the government does not get away from the fact that it is the Liberal party, takes a certain position in the House, has given to it or has taken to itself, a privilege, the right to spend public money which is not available to those taking other positions. At the very least, there are enough precedents regarding this that the House ought to have the chance to send the matter to a committee for investigation.

That is the only question to which you have to address yourself. You do not have to say there has been a wrongdoing or there has not been a wrongdoing. You do not have to say that money has been wrongly spent. All you have to convince yourself is that there is enough question about what has happened that the House should have the right to decide whether the matter is to be sent to a committee for investigation.

As Your Honour knows from past experience, at least from the experience of former Speakers, you might decide that there is a sufficient prima facie case of privilege that the motion might be put and the government could well use its majority to vote it down. However, at this point I think we are on sound

ground for insisting that there is a question that ought to be looked into.

I know that the precedent I want to quote is one that I have quoted quite a few times. By now, everybody else in the House must know it as well as I do, but I think it is valid. Back in 1964 and 1965 when the Liberal government brought before Parliament the Canada Pension Plan, which was sponsored by the Hon. Judy LaMarsh, there developed a tremendous advertising campaign against that legislation sponsored by the insurance industry in this country.

I was greatly annoyed. In due course I spoke to Judy LaMarsh about it. I said to her, "Is it not possible for some government advertising to be put in the press to counter these unfair attacks being made by the insurance industry?" As I have said many times, the reply was, "Stanley, I have wanted to do that. I have tried to do it but they tell me"—I don't know who "they" were, Treasury Board or somebody—"it cannot be done. We cannot spend public money on a measure that has not been passed by Parliament."

She went on to say that once the legislation was passed, her department would be free to advertise its benefits and so on. At any rate, her position was that she had tried but the rule was there. What bothers me is that the present Minister of State for Multiculturalism (Mr. Fleming) is changing the rule.

Before I come to what I want to say that flows from that case, may I say that the other precedent which applies in this instance has already been quoted by the hon. member for St. John's East, namely, the ruling by Mr. Speaker Jerome regarding funds being used by the Clark government for committees or task forces which were made up of Conservative members only. Mr. Speaker Jerome in a reasoned, thoughtful and careful judgment, said it was his view that parliamentary funds have to be made available in such a way that Parliament as a whole is getting the advantage of them.

You may say there is a slight difference, that Mr. Speaker Jerome was talking about parliamentary funds, House of Commons funds if you will, for which the Speaker was responsible. You may say that the funds that are now being used are not coming out of your budget, that they are coming out of the federal government budget. However, the ultimate source is the same in both cases, the taxpayers of Canada.

If Mr. Speaker Jerome thought it was unfair for taxpayers' money to be used to get certain information and do certain things in which only the government side was involved, I suggest it is at least an open question as to whether the present government has the right to use taxpayers' funds to advertise on behalf of its position. I think the whole question of advocacy advertising, subliminal efforts, and all of these things raise many moral questions and questions that relate to our future. It is a good time for us to look at this whole practice. However, as I said earlier, I am not asking you to make a judgment on that. I am saying you have to judge whether there is a sufficient amount of evidence that the question is one that ought to be looked into.