

*Tax Court of Canada Act*

**Mr. Riis:** No one says that is an appropriate practice. The Conservatives promised the seniors that this would be a priority when they became Government. A year has passed and it is a simple item. It would require five minutes of the time of the House of Commons because I know there would be no opposition to such a progressive element. However, here we are today debating a tax Bill which could have included such a measure.

Again, I urge Hon. Members opposite, including the Minister of Transport (Mr. Mazankowski) who I know is concerned about these kinds of issues, to use his good office and his voice within Cabinet to ensure that a Bill bringing fairness to the taxpayers as it pertains to senior citizens is brought forward as quickly as possible. I believe I have said what I wish to say about this particular Bill. Bill C-72 is welcome. It is not very exciting. It is 239 pages of attempts to simplify the tax system which somehow to me seems to be a contradiction. Nevertheless, Mr. Speaker, we will do what we can to facilitate as a New Democratic Party the passage of this Bill through all stages today.

● (1820)

**Mr. Alan Redway (York East):** Mr. Speaker, I want to make three brief comments about Bill C-72. The first is to comment on the remarks of the Hon. Member for Kamloops-Shuswap (Mr. Riis) relating to the main change contained in this Bill with respect to the Income Tax Act. That, of course, is the whole concept of making sure that the taxpayer is considered to be innocent and not guilty from the outset. In the past our tax laws and the Income Tax Act assumed that the taxpayer, once the assessment was made, was guilty and had to pay the tax bill before appealing the matter. This has now been changed and there is a presumption of innocence, not guilt. However, Mr. Speaker, I was most disturbed by the remarks of the Hon. Member for Gander-Twillingate (Mr. Baker) because he made no reference to this aspect of the Bill. That is remarkable because when the Ways and Means motion relating to this Bill was introduced, his Party actually voted against the motion and opposed the concept that the taxpayer should be assumed innocent rather than guilty from the outset. That, of course, was the system under the previous Liberal Government of which the Hon. Member was a part. Apparently he and his Party want to see that continue because they opposed the change and called for a recorded vote when the Ways and Means motion was before the House. I hope he and his Party are going to change their attitude when this Bill comes to a vote today.

There are two other points I want to make which were raised by my friend from British Columbia. They have to do first of all with the simplifying of the tax system and, secondly, with the question of fairness of the tax system. As far as simplification is concerned, my hon. friend is quite aware that there were discussion papers released with the Budget which provide for discussion this whole issue. We now have that opportunity, it is out there for discussion, and I hope he and his Party will be commenting on it. The second question is that of fairness. Once again, the Budget indicated we were going to be bringing in legislation regarding a minimum tax effective

January 1, 1986. It provided for the elimination of tax shelters and income splitting. All those things will be contained in legislation to be brought forward shortly to implement the Budget. This Bill is strictly a housekeeping measure, as my hon. friend points out, with the exception of that very important principle that a taxpayer is considered innocent from the outset. I trust, having said all that, that there will be unanimous agreement by all Parties very quickly on this Bill.

**Mr. Baker:** Mr. Speaker, just a very short comment. I just wanted to say that if the principle of being innocent until proven guilty were applied to all cases before the Federal Tax Court of Canada, it would indeed be a very good Bill. As I pointed out in my remarks, the point is that most of the cases before that court really do not relate to taxes at all; they relate to other matters which the Minister of National Revenue is responsible for such as the Unemployment Insurance Act and other Acts. Certainly this principle is not carried through.

As far as the Liberal Party being against the Bill is concerned, I think I pointed out why we wanted more changes in this Bill. The fact is that we are really objecting to the fact that this Government got elected on a lot more promises than that simple change to the Income Tax Act.

**Mr. Mazankowski:** And we are fulfilling them one by one, and you know it.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski):** Is the House ready for the question?

**Some Hon. Members:** Question.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski):** Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

**Some Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski):** Accordingly, pursuant to an order made earlier this day, the Bill stands referred to Committee of the Whole.

Motion agreed to, Bill read the second time and the House went into Committee thereon, Mr. Paproski in the chair.

**The Deputy Chairman:** Order. House in Committee of the Whole on Bill C-72, An Act to amend the statute law relating to income tax and to make a related amendment to the Tax Court of Canada Act.

Shall Clause 1 carry?

On Clause 1—

**Mr. Riis:** Mr. Chairman, the Parliamentary Secretary will probably be well aware of the points raised at second reading concerning the quarterly payments seniors are prepared to pay and the problems associated with that. Are we going to be seeing some rapid legislation brought forward on that matter in order to bring some relief to those hard-pressed seniors?