

Allotment of Time for Bill C-11

I suggest the Minister of Finance will be back to this House, and to this parliament within a year, admitting some of the things proposed now are not working, asking this parliament for changes to the income tax legislation, to his fiscal policy. He may be back in six months. If we are going to have an election, he will probably be back even earlier than that. Under those conditions, Mr. Speaker, I suggest it is mere folly for the government not to listen to the very intelligent and earnest representations which could be made by this side of the House to the minister and to the government so that this bill, which is before us, will leave parliament in vastly improved condition.

Obviously the Minister of Finance is not interested. Nobody in the government is interested. They have their minds made up. "All systems are go. To hell with the taxpayer. To hell with the Parliament of Canada. Hurrah, hurrah for our side." This is the situation we have to face, Mr. Speaker. It is essential that we who care for the values of this place, and the things it can do, should protest not so much the element of time but the cavalier treatment which is accorded to the members of the House of Commons by the government in connection with its budgetary measures, and the steps it has taken in connection with this particular bill.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Alexander: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker—

An hon. Member: You are in your seat.

Mr. Alexander: I am sorry, I was not in my place when I started to raise my point of order. I do not want to get involved with this debate about the government cutting the throat of the opposition—

An hon. Member: Not true.

Mr. Alexander: Could the minister give us some indication tonight as to the number of amendments which he intends to bring in in order to make a bad bill just a little bit better? Could we have an indication of the number of amendments he has in mind?

Mr. Chrétien: I have already tabled a few technical amendments when we were in committee. On Friday I gave the opposition parties one further amendment I wish to introduce, that is, an amendment my colleagues approved only last week, so it was impossible to deliver it previously. These are the only new amendments we are proposing.

An hon. Member: How many?

Mr. Chrétien: The others are well known by the opposition. We have approved five clauses in the last five weeks—

An hon. Member: How many amendments?

Mr. Chrétien:—and at that rate it will be 110 weeks before we pass the bill.

An hon. Member: How many amendments?

[Mr. Baldwin.]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Turner): Order, please.

Mr. Alexander: I appreciate the comments of the minister, but unlike other ministers with whom I have dealt in terms of other pieces of legislation, we have always had the number of amendments. All I am asking the minister is this: how many amendments? Un, deux, trois, quatre, cinq, six, etc. How many amendments has the minister at 8.40 p.m. on this date? I am not asking for a rundown of what they are about—just how many.

Mr. Chrétien: They are all on paper.

An hon. Member: Get out your computer. How many?

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): On the same point of order, Mr. Speaker, since we will be under closure when we get back to the Committee of the Whole, how is the minister going to get amendments before the committee to clauses we may not have reached before the guillotine falls?

Mr. Alexander: A very good question.

Mr. Chrétien: If we do not reach an item, we will not have any amendments. We will have to live with the bill as it is. As we say in French—

[Translation]

They bitterly regret it.

[English]

● (2042)

Mr. Stevens: Following on the rather evasive answers by the Minister of Finance (Mr. Chrétien) to my colleague from Hamilton West, I wonder if the minister could be more explicit. Are the amendments we have yet to consider in committee of the whole, beyond the technical ones that he referred to, the ones that were given to us in private on Friday afternoon, numbering eight, and there will be no more amendments?

Mr. Alexander: That is the question.

[Translation]

Mr. Chrétien: Mr. Speaker, on Friday the hon. member received only the amendments which we will suggest if we reach that clause. I think it is clause 14. However, at the rate we are going it will at least take three weeks to come to it.

[English]

Mr. John M. Reid (Kenora-Rainy River): Mr. Speaker, if one had listened to the discussion in the House since eight o'clock, one would have the feeling from listening to the opposition that this bill had only just come into the House of Commons, that it had been discussed for perhaps just one day, and there had been practically no time spent on it in the House of Commons.