

Mortgage Tax Credit

who have only been here a couple of weeks. I should like to get an answer from the government House leader, if possible.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. Perhaps I can indicate that the precedents are clear, that the day upon which the House embarks upon the business which is the subject matter of an order pursuant to Standing Order 75C does not count as the first sitting day. Therefore, one sitting day remains to be allotted at the close of the business of today. If an entire day is not used tomorrow for that subject, because of the budget tomorrow night, then some further hours would have to be spent. The number is not certain. Perhaps in the interval between now and the start of business tomorrow, the House leaders could decide whether they could come to some agreement on that account.

Pursuant to Standing Order 54 I do now leave the chair for the House to go into Committee of the Whole.

[English]

INCOME TAX ACT**AMENDMENT TO PROVIDE TAX CREDIT IN RESPECT OF
MORTGAGE INTEREST AND PROPERTY TAX**

The House resumed from Wednesday, December 5, consideration in committee of Bill C-20, to amend the Income Tax Act to provide a tax credit in respect of mortgage interest and home owner property tax—Mr. Crosbie—Mr. Laniel in the chair.

The Chairman: Order, please. When the committee rose on December 5, 1979, clause 1 of the bill was under consideration. Hon. members might be interested in what I am going to say. Because the order that has been adopted tonight provides, "that, at fifteen minutes before the expiry of the time provided for government business on that day"—meaning the day on which we will complete consideration of committee stage of Bill C-20—"all questions will have to be put." The danger is that the committee might be placed in some difficulty unless hon. members plan the work of the committee ahead of time.

During the day I heard some hon. members say to others that no amendments had been moved in committee, while others affirmed that some amendments had been moved in committee. I must say officially that the Chair has no amendment in front of it and no amendment can be in front of the Chair unless it is moved. Because we can only have one amendment in front of us at a time, and vote on only one amendment at a time, all those amendments of which the Table might have received notice are not officially in front of us until we reach them and make a decision on them.

If, by any chance, hon. members debate the bill on clause 1 up to 15 minutes before the end of the time allowed, the Chairman will have no alternative but to put the question on clauses 1, 2, 3, the title, and the bill, and will in no way be able to receive amendments at that time.

I just make that suggestion and I hope hon. members will take it into account when planning the work of the committee.

[Mr. Lefebvre.]

On clause 1—

Mr. Axworthy: Just to put your mind at ease, Mr. Chairman, I hasten to assure you that we intend to move several amendments to this bill. Any anticipation you might have of being able to go home early could be quickly discarded. We will be very glad to satisfy your request that changes be made to this piece of legislation.

Let me begin by observing that the Minister of Finance is unable to be with us this evening. I extend my sympathies to him, as I know what a difficult position he is in. He does not have an oil agreement, he does not have an agreement on pricing, and he does not have an agreement on most things that pertain to this government. We certainly understand that, in a moment of panic, he would flee the House very early, in the hope that he can arrive at some last minute negotiations.

By contrast, Mr. Chairman, I note the high rage and indignation he expressed previously about the fact that members of the opposition had not given him an opportunity to consider amendments. I am sorry he is not here to listen to and participate in this debate, which he has called one of the more important initiatives of his government. I suppose this is an indication of the priority the Minister of Finance gives to this bill. After he and his colleagues have flexed their muscles to deny totally the democratic rights and privileges of members of this House, he now feels sufficient disdain that he can leave even though, in his own words, this matter is of such great importance that he has reason to be elsewhere.

I welcome the presence of the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, knowing him to be a person of great reason and rationality—probably more so than the minister himself. However, we want to express our own concern that the Minister of Finance is not here because we believe that the amendments that will be brought forward are ones which will have serious consequences for this bill. It is unfortunate that the senior minister responsible for the legislation is not in his seat and therefore able to exercise his judgment as to whether the government is prepared to accept them or not.

● (2100)

One of the questions we certainly want to raise at the outset is whether we are going to be treated to the same sham performance we received previously, where the government is really not prepared to accept the amendments.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Axworthy: It would help if members opposite were able to restrain their own particular form of verbal pollution for a while so that we shall be able to get these amendments out and make our arguments. We are obviously debating the wrong bill. We should be debating certain game laws to keep those people in their seats, in their own particular wilderness experience, to be restrained so that those of us in this House who treat these amendments with a degree of seriousness are allowed to do our job. I would only ask some co-operation from members because what I say is important to them. I only hope