

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Monday, December 9, 1957

The house met at 2.30 p.m.

PRIVILEGE

MR. CHRISTIAN—OPPORTUNITY OF MEMBERS TO SPEND CHRISTMAS WITH FAMILIES

Mr. F. C. Christian (Okanagan Boundary): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a question of privilege. This question of privilege involves the right of members to see and be with their families at Christmas, to meet with their constituents and become better acquainted with their problems, and to exercise the privileges which are within the grasp of certain Ontario and Quebec members. The question I wish to ask of the Prime Minister is this. In view of the statement by the house leader—

Mr. Speaker: Order. Will the hon. member defer his question until we come to the question period. If he has a question of privilege he wishes to raise he may do it now, but I understand he is about to put a question.

Mr. Christian: As a question of privilege may I put the question?

Mr. Speaker: If it is a question of privilege the hon. member has the opportunity to state it.

Mr. Christian: I have stated the question of privilege already, Mr. Speaker.

In view of the statement by the house leader that we were elected not to run home for long holidays but to do the business of the country, and in view of the statement in the *Globe and Mail* of December 9, 1957, that there may be difficulty in finishing the business of the session before January 14, 1958, should the members of parliament cancel their plans to return home for Christmas?

Right Hon. J. G. Diefenbaker (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, with the leave of the house, the right hon. Leader of the Opposition spoke to me earlier and I told him I would make a statement on this question tomorrow. I could have made it today, but under all the circumstances I think tomorrow will be sufficiently early. However, the hon. member may be assured of one thing. There is going to be nothing in the nature of denial to hon. members of their opportunity to spend their Christmas holidays at their homes and in their constituencies.

EXCISE TAX ACT

Hon. Donald M. Fleming (Minister of Finance) moved for leave to introduce Bill No. 231, to amend the Excise Tax Act.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Mr. Speaker, on a point of order, may I ask Your Honour at what point in the proceedings one should ask a question as to whether or not it is appropriate to introduce a bill amending tax legislation without the matter first being considered in committee of ways and means?

Mr. Speaker: If there is a question of order with respect to this matter it should be raised as soon as I have put the question. Is it the pleasure of the house that the hon. minister shall have leave to introduce the said bill?

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Mr. Speaker, I would ask you to consider the point of order that it is not appropriate to ask parliament to amend any tax legislation without the matter first being considered by the committee of ways and means. We had something to say about this matter on Friday evening, and I will not take the time of the house to repeat what was said on either side of the issue at that time except to point out that I read from passages in Bourinot to the effect that in the Canadian House of Commons any change in taxation measures must first be dealt with in the committee of ways and means.

I offer today in the main just one other piece of evidence. It is difficult to find many instances in the past where bills amending taxation statutes have done nothing else but reduce taxes or provide alleviation. However, there were three such examples in April of this very year. At that time, when Hon. Mr. Harris, the former minister of finance, brought his budget before the house, he presented measures amending the Excise Act, the Excise Tax Act and the Income Tax Act. I have carefully compared the provisions of chapters 25, 26 and 29 of the statutes of this year with the resolutions which were introduced prior to the introduction of those bills. I find that there is nothing in the bills except reduction or alleviation of taxes. I find that every point of reduction, every point of alleviation indicated in the bills is covered in the resolutions.

I am just as sure as I am certain that I am standing here that last spring, when the