

*Foreign Economic Boycotts*

He said: Mr. Speaker, this is the first period in this Parliament for private members' public bills. I am honoured and lucky—because it partly results from the official lottery held by the Speaker—to be able to speak on the first private member's bill and to have my bill respecting foreign economic boycotts be the bill for consideration in this first hour.

I am particularly happy to be able to do this because I am delighted to recall for the government and members opposite commitments made in the last Parliament by members of the Conservative party, including its leader, and during the election campaign by the Prime Minister (Mr. Clark), to take seriously, as he put it, bills put forward by private members. This is such a bill. Too often in the past it was the practice for private members' bills to be talked out and not permitted to be referred to committee or be discussed. I hope that in the spirit the Prime Minister showed before the opening of this session this bill will indeed be referred to committee for consideration. I look forward to that consideration.

There are other members who may want to speak on the bill and a lot will depend on my being brief. I will be as brief as possible in order to give those members a chance to speak without the bill being talked out at six o'clock and so that it can be referred to committee instead of dropping to the bottom of the list. I hope that will not happen.

I have good reason to be confident that will not happen because Bill C-203 ought to look very familiar to all members of the House. It is an exact copy—both the French and English are identical—of Bill C-32 which stood on the order paper at the conclusion of the last Parliament.

Bill C-32 had a very special procedure associated with it and a very special history. In the closing days of the last Parliament, that bill was accepted by members of the opposition who are now the government. Their official party position was in support of that bill. Therefore, we have the government committed in advance to support Bill C-203, not only in principle but in effect every word in the bill. I say this because they indicated they were prepared to give their unanimous consent to dealing with that bill in one day and seeing it passed.

At the same time my own party, the Liberal party, was also in favour of the bill. I am glad to be able to report that my party remains committed to what was Bill C-32 and is now Bill C-203. Therefore, the two principal parties are in favour of it.

Furthermore, in the last Parliament the NDP indicated that they too were in favour of this bill. They would have given it the three readings in one day. Therefore, what we have before us is not an ordinary private member's bill but one which was a public bill of the government at the end of the last Parliament. It had been unanimously accepted by all parties in the House. It did not proceed as all parties would have wanted because two or three members, certainly not more, withheld the unanimous consent which was required to deal with the bill under the special procedure being proposed by the then House leader.

This bill does not need to be discussed very much before reference to committee, but I do want to say a couple of things

[Mr. Kaplan.]

about it. First, I know that it is not entirely satisfactory to many members in the House. The government proposed four amendments which I did not include in the bill because I did not want to alter it from the state it was in when it had unanimous consent. I too had proposed some amendments to Bill C-32. I would still like to see some amendments when it gets to committee and we discuss it. I did not put my amendments into it because I did not want to diminish the unanimity this bill had when it was on the list of government bills.

I read in the newspapers, and members opposite can speak about this, a statement attributed to the House leader that the boycott legislation no longer has the high priority the government indicated it once had. I want to take a moment to urge the government not to consider Bill C-203 as part of the issues being dealt with in connection with the move of the Canadian embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem or with the Stanfield mission.

The bill refers to the Arab boycott and it derives from events in the Middle East, there is no doubt about that. However, it is an entirely internal piece of legislation that has to do with the civil rights of Canadians. It does not have anything to do with the relationship between Canada and countries in the Middle East. It has nothing to do with the conflict. It has nothing to do with the primary boycott, which is the business of Israel, not Canada, the business of the Arab countries, and not directly the business of this Parliament.

Bill C-203 is designed to do what my earlier bill which received unanimous consent and party approval was designed to do, simply to assure that the Arab boycott had no internal application in Canada to diminish the civil liberties of any Canadians. That is the issue. The issue is not the resolution of events in the Middle East.

I recall the Prime Minister saying he believed the move of the embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem would contribute to bringing peace to the Middle East. I have a text of those remarks. I did not agree with him. Events have shown it was a regrettable decision that he reached. However, we are not going to consult with parties in the Middle East, as Mr. Stanfield is doing, regarding the civil liberties of Canadians within Canada. I do not think Mr. Stanfield asked the PLO whether the civil liberties of any groups of Canadians should be protected. I do not believe he asked the Prime Minister of Israel or the President of Egypt about that. It has nothing to do with issues between parties in the Middle East. It has everything to do with the civil liberties of Canadians.

The tertiary effect of the Arab boycott would require companies complying with the boycott to discriminate against their employees, customers and suppliers on the ground that they were Jewish. I look forward to hearing the support of all members for the protection of civil liberties on something as fundamental as that.

● (1710)

Since, there are others who wish to speak on the bill, I should like only to remind members that in its present form this is a reporting bill. It is not a bill which requires trade not