

The Economy

Many years ago in my own business we had to decide whether to deal with government forms or do business and try to make a profit. I devised a very simple system, Mr. Speaker. All the government forms that came in were sorted into two piles, one for Statistics Canada and the other for the tax department. Recognizing that if I did not pay my taxes I would have some difficulties, I had my accountant look after the tax forms. For the other forms, however, I bought a large rubber stamp which said "not applicable". I bought a red stamp pad and stamped all the Statistics Canada forms "not applicable", put them in the envelopes and sent them back. I received a form letter from Statistics Canada referring to form No. such and such which was "not applicable" according to the words written in the relevant part. There was a squiggly signature which looked like something out of the Arabic alphabet. The next time a form came in we just stamped it "not applicable" and sent it back. A strange thing happened Mr. Speaker—government forms were cut by 40 per cent. That allowed me to earn a profit that year and to pay some taxes.

Another example I should like to give is the income tax form. I can remember when that form was about the size of a No. 10 envelope and was very simple. Today it is in four or five colours and comes with a manual. The television carries cartoons telling us how easy the form is to fill in, seminars are held on the subject and there is a proliferation of companies in the income tax business which make a profit out of filling out a government form. Surely that is an indication that the growth of regulations and forms is out of control. I am sure that if we asked the Minister of National Revenue (Mr. Guay) if the tax form could be simplified he would reply that the government are studying it. Every minister studies it, Mr. Speaker. This is a serious matter and we must deal with it.

I am also concerned about definitions. The language of regulations is weird and wonderful. For instance, the auto pact carries a definition of a motor vehicle. It is described as a vehicle having an engine, wheels, tires and so on that can travel on the highway. Then the body that fits on to a motor vehicle is described and "for the purposes of the act" that body, which has no motor or wheels, is a "motor vehicle". This language is twisted around for the purposes of the act and oranges and apples and grapes become bananas. This is the sort of thing we have to deal with in regulations. I have travelled this country from coast to coast on business and regulations that are applied in Vancouver have a different interpretation in Montreal.

● (1752)

As we look into this process, we find this is one of the great things inhibiting the economy of Canada at this time, and we will have to deal with it sooner or later. I believe there is no better way to deal with this matter than for the parliament of this country to do so through a committee or through a standing committee structure, along the lines of the public accounts committee. We have the competence to deal with it, and I certainly know we have the interest to deal with it

[Mr. Kempling.]

because of the serious plight our economy is in and the high level of unemployment that we face at this time.

I would mention one other thing, Mr. Speaker. When you run a business you gather up a lot of letters, forms and records. If you ask someone in the federal government how long you should keep your business records and which business records you should keep, you cannot get an answer. I sometimes wonder whether somebody in the government, maybe some member, has some shares or stock in a company which manufactures filing cabinets. There is hardly a business in operation which is not overloaded with filing cabinets full of dead records. We have spawned a whole industry microfilming these records just to try to comply with government regulations.

The customs forms that we use for importing goods into Canada state "Subject to review". Every customs entry is subject to review. Look at the difficulty that creates from a businessman's point of view when he is required to certify the profit that he has made and he knows that perhaps \$1 million of it is subject to review. There is no limitation to it. There is no statute of limitations. As we go through this whole process of regulating, which I hope we will review in the near future, I hope that we will follow this suggestion that we have made and look very carefully into these things. We should involve the members of parliament in this process so that they can respond to their constituents who come to them with very real problems concerning government regulations and the interpretation of those regulations. We should try to get rid of some of the tyranny that is placed on the business community by some of the bureaucrats that we must deal with.

I can say no more at this time other than to ask the President of the Treasury Board to consider again the remarks made by my colleagues and those that will follow. We are very sincere in the motion that we have put forward and we do want to see things turned about in this country. We do not like to see the economy travelling in the direction it is. We do not take any pleasure in the negative attitude that we see in some parts of Canada.

Indeed, in my own business I was so struck by the negative attitude of my own directors that I caused them to approve an addition to my little factory because I came to the conclusion that there was no better time to build than right now when construction prices could be had at such a reasonable level.

We are genuinely concerned about where this country is going, to the extent that we put our motion forward and we ask you to consider it seriously.

[English]

ROYAL ASSENT

A message was delivered by the Gentleman Usher of the Black Rod, as follows:

Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Deputy to the Governor General desires the immediate attendance of this honourable House in the Chamber of the honourable the Senate.