

members of the calibre of the hon. member for Peace River back here to take part in the proceedings of this Parliament.

With respect to the measure now before us, the second reading of Bill C-11, all I want to do is to bring a bit of perspective to the situation so that it will not appear that it is a case of the saints being over on the government side correcting what has been done by the sinners who now sit in the ranks of the official opposition. I would remind the government that not many years ago an almost identical thing happened, but in reverse. In that case it was the Tories who were the sinners and the Liberals who were the saints—it is hard to tell the difference between them.

**Mr. Baldwin:** We have been absolved.

**Mr. Knowles:** In any event, what has happened this year is that the Liberals, while in power, used the Financial Administration Act to increase postal rates, a practice which seems highly questionable—in fact, I think it is illegal. And the Tories, having come to power, are proposing to correct that situation by bringing in a statute to validate those rates. Incidentally, it is being done rather early in the game because of a court case.

Back in 1962, only a week after the election of that year, which was held on June 18, perhaps less than a week, the Conservative government of the day, led by the late Mr. Diefenbaker, brought in an order to raise certain import duties. As you know, Mr. Speaker, customs duties can only be raised by act of Parliament. But Mr. Diefenbaker and his cabinet found a way of doing it by using the Financial Administration Act. What they did was to use a provision in the customs tariff so as to transfer all rates of duty from one column to another. But that process produced higher rates than they wanted, so they forgave part of them by using the Financial Administration Act so as to bring in the amount of increase they wanted.

Throughout that Parliament the Liberals and New Democrats contended that this was an abuse of the powers granted by the Financial Administration Act. Mr. Diefenbaker and his Conservatives stood firm, however. They said the course they had taken was a correct one and they refused to budge. But in 1963 there was an election and the Liberals came to power. In the meantime, there was a court case just as there is now; persons affected by the higher rates were challenging the validity of the order in council which had been made. So the Liberals, when they came to power, brought in an act to correct the situation by validating the customs changes which had been made by the Tory government under the Financial Administration Act. So it is simply the case of the saints and the sinners having changed places. What surely is apparent by now is that any government must exercise extreme care about the use of the Financial Administration Act to bring about changes which ought to be brought about only by acts of Parliament.

### *Postal Rates*

● (1610)

In that connection my friend, the hon. member for Nickel Belt (Mr. Rodriguez), was quite within his right in drawing attention to some other things that might be done under the Financial Administration Act, particularly in terms of privatizing certain Crown corporations, and that this experience and the experience of 1962 and 1963 should underline the point that where there are things that are required to be done by an act of Parliament, no government should slither around that requirement by using unfairly and unjustifiably the provisions of the Financial Administration Act.

As I said, I simply wanted to add this bit of perspective and thus to point out that mistakes have been made on both sides, and in each case the other side has had to correct it. Let us hope that this is the last time the provisions of the Financial Administration Act are used improperly, as has been done in the instance I have cited, by both the Tories and the Liberals.

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Ted Miller (Nanaimo-Alberni):** Mr. Speaker, I would just like to express my appreciation to the last two gentlemen who have preceded me in this debate and whom I have found very helpful in my new role as member of Parliament. The hon. member for Peace River (Mr. Baldwin), who assisted in the seminar for new members, had comments that were very useful, particularly the comment about setting some priority on our time. In my own party, the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles) has been more than helpful—

**Mr. Baldwin:** I commend to you the virtues of rebellion too.

**Mr. Miller:** —in allowing us to sort out some of the paper work which we are obliged to go through every day in our jobs.

I am particularly pleased today to make some comments on the bill before us, Bill C-11. I found very quickly that usually we do not get a great deal of warning before having to rise to speak in the House. I have some comments to make which I thought would be useful to the minister who, I know, is sincere in trying to reorganize the postal service so that the community at large can have more confidence in it than it has had in the past.

I am also appreciative of the short comment which goes with this bill and explains the bill in terms that many of us can understand.

It states:

This bill would confirm the amendments to postage rates that were made by regulation.

This short statement allows us to find the germ of the idea in this bill. I think the public has some reservations about legislation, about legislatures and also about members who draw up that legislation. The public is somewhat confused about the laws and is searching for some simple way of regulating their lives around the kinds of regulations that are often imposed upon them.