

*Income Tax Act*

around tippy-toe trying to find a hiding spot for a bill of this size.

If members of the Conservative party were not prepared for the debate on second reading and on the Committee of the Whole stage, after having had the whole summer, they certainly were alone in this because every lawyer and every chartered accountant I know had access to the bill and was working on it. I am surprised that the lawyers, accountants and supporters of the Conservative party did not make copies available to them, or that copies were not obtained from the distribution office or from the government.

Another matter which should be dealt with is the question of who did all the talking on the second reading and Committee of the Whole stages. Who was unprepared? The hon. member for Edmonton West, who I think has a very good grasp of the principles of the bill, spoke 40 times. The hon. member for Halifax-East Hants (Mr. McCleave) spoke 16 times and the hon. member for Parry Sound-Muskoka (Mr. Aiken) spoke 12 times. I did not bother counting the contributions the House leader for the Tory Party made because he never spoke once on the bill.

What we are debating is the question of how much time is enough time to pass legislation. During the past year we have had three examples of legislation going through the Committee of the Whole. We had the government reorganization bill, the Emergency War Measures Act and this bill. What about the results in each case? Each case took at least a month of the time of the House of Commons. In the case of the government reorganization bill two amendments were forced by the opposition. One made the Minister of the Environment the Minister of Fisheries, and the other required that when a Minister of State is appointed there is to be a two-hour debate in the House of Commons. I do not know whether the opposition feels that after six weeks of debate these are significant amendments. I think they are a waste of time.

We must also look at what transpired in respect of the War Measures Act. Not one amendment was accepted. This was another waste of time. The bill should have been sent to the Standing Committee on Justice and Legal Affairs instead of taking up the time of the House in Committee of the Whole.

What has happened is that the role of Parliament has changed. The only thing that has not changed is the opposition members. This same old party has remained as it has been in the last 50 years. The members are condemning themselves forever to staying in the opposition because they do not understand how Canadian society in the 'sixties and 'seventies works and why they will not win the next election. The House of Commons is a forum for debate. The question to decide is how long shall a debate continue, how long should the debate go on, given the quality of debate we get. I suggest that any member opposite who reads the debates on the Committee of the Whole stage and discovers how many speeches in point of fact were directed to the clauses under discussion will find that very little of the debate was really germane or to the point.

**An hon. Member:** What are you speaking about?

[Mr. Reid.]

**Mr. Reid:** I am speaking of the allocation of time motion. At least I am on the point. Then the question is, when shall a decision be taken? I thought the comments made by the House leader of the New Democratic Party were particularly well taken. In effect he said that this Parliament has been a failure as it had been unable to allocate its time in any meaningful way, any sensible way or in any way in which the Canadian public could take at least a simple sense of pride. The point is that once we get on a piece of legislation there is no way to bring debate to a conclusion unless the opposition determines it. Whether or not a debate comes to a conclusion has nothing at all to do with whether an amendment of substance is accepted, as witness the two cases I gave before of the government reorganization bill and the Emergency War Measures Act. There must be some mechanism for bringing a debate to a conclusion. The sooner we work out in this chamber an allocation of time, the less we will have to go through uncomfortable scenes of this nature.

I point out to the House leader of the Conservative Party that there is power within Standing Order 75B, according to some readings of it, for the three opposition parties to determine when the debate should close. If there was any other motive on the other side except an attempt to extend the debate indefinitely they certainly would have been able to come to an agreement with the government under rule 75B which would have had the effect of concluding debate in a reasonable time. The reason we are implementing 75C is that there is no agreement between parties opposite and the government. So we have a failure of Members of Parliament and particularly the parties of this Parliament.

We have a responsible system of government. A responsible system of government implies that parties will take positions, will debate and then reach a conclusion. We were sent here to talk, certainly, but the other half of the equation, that we are also sent here to take decisions, should not be forgotten.

• (3:40 p.m.)

**Mr. W. B. Nesbitt (Oxford):** Mr. Speaker, some of us have listened with considerable interest to the Fascist-tinged philosophy of the hon. member for Kenora-Rainy River (Mr. Reid) who just sat down. Clearly he has not the slightest comprehension of the purpose of Parliament or of the parliamentary process, but many of us assume that his ideas are exactly those of many members of the government party who sit not only at the back but on the front benches. His strange reference to the debate in committee being irrelevant seemed to me at least to be a reflection on Your Honour as it is my understanding that debate in this chamber, in committee stage or at any other stage, is required to be relevant. But that means nothing to the hon. member.

It is very interesting that the hon. member who has just taken his seat brought up the question of when closure should be applied. That is a good question. Clearly one time it should be instituted is in the case of a national emergency. I do not think there would be any argument about that; a debate in such circumstances is something we would have to forgo, as indeed members of any Canadian parliament should. But in this case we are not