

*Income Tax Act*

**Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre):** Third, closing off debate in this way by unilateral action on the part of the government is an admission of absolute failure to find a sensible way to plan and allocate the time of the parliamentary year. Every time this is done we put off the day when such a sensible plan will be achieved.

I said, Mr. Speaker, that my first reason today for opposing this measure is that introducing closure at this stage is a violation of the purpose of third reading. I hold in my hand the *Journals* for the session of 1968-69 and I am looking at page 433 which contains a portion of the third report of the Special Committee on Procedure of the House which had been tabled that day. That report annotated the procedural changes that were made in that session and gave the views of the Special Committee on Procedure. The paragraph to which I wish to draw attention represents the thinking and the wording of the present Minister of National Defence (Mr. Macdonald) who was then the government House leader. This was agreed to unanimously by the committee but I emphasize—the minister was in the House a few minutes ago and I wish he were here now—that the thinking and the wording were given to us by the government itself. I quote from the report:

The motion for third reading would read:

"That this bill be now read a third time and passed."

This wording will indicate clearly and unambiguously that the final and most crucial decision relating to the passage of a bill would be taken at the third reading.

Later in that same paragraph I read:

We wish to emphasize that the third reading should always be the decisive stage and that in the case of a highly controversial bill it could be a most crucial debating stage.

All of the talk about what happened on second reading and in Committee of the Whole is not now relevant. If these words mean anything they mean that we are now at the most crucial stage of the debate on Bill C-259. Yet, the House having had only one day of debate at the third reading stage, the government gave notice of closure under 75C. That is a complete violation of the purpose of third reading which we agreed to in 1968. If there is any willingness on the other side to have some integrity about these things, I submit that the President of the Privy Council (Mr. MacEachen) ought now to stand in his place and ask for withdrawal of his motion.

The second point I seek to make today, Mr. Speaker, is found in the words I have read in a number of newspaper editorials, that pushing this bill through in this way is contempt of Parliament and of the parliamentary process. As the hon. member for Edmonton West (Mr. Lambert) pointed out, in Committee of the Whole we had literally no discussion on most of the clauses of the bill. We spent a lot of time discussing clause 1 with its hundreds of pages. We spent an hour or two on clause 2. But the other 74 clauses of Bill C-259 were not discussed for one second in the House of Commons. To ask parliament now to put this measure through its final, crucial, decisive stage under closure, I submit is precisely what some of the editorial writers are saying; it is contempt of Parliament.

**Mr. Lewis:** Contempt of the people.

**Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre):** And, as my leader suggests, contempt of the people. That is what the

[Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre).]

Canadian people are feeling. I am getting this reaction in newspaper editorials and in letters. Questions are put to me, "Isn't there something you can do? Can't you stop this? Does the government, simply because it has a majority, have the right to lord it over Parliament in this way?" I have to answer that it used closure in 1969 to put through rule 75C and now it is using the closure that is part of 75C to put through this bill despite the fact that most of it has not been discussed, as I have already pointed out.

Not having had the opportunity to deal with the bill as it should have been dealt with in Committee of the Whole stage, there would normally be an opportunity on third reading to move a number of amendments for reference back to the committee to discuss some of these points. We in our party have about ten such amendments that we would like to move. I am getting one of them in today. We hope we will get in a second, but I am not sure we will. The other parties have amendments they would like to move, but with closure falling on Friday there is not a chance in the world of getting the various phases of the bill reconsidered at third reading. In fact, the word "reconsidered" is hardly correct because most of them have not been considered at all.

I submit that we have here a case of utter disregard of the rights of parliament and utter disregard of the rights of the Canadian people for the government to impose this rule at this time. As I say, had there been a couple of weeks debate on third reading there might have been some justification for it. But there had only been one day's debate. Let no member on the other side start to tell me about the 30 or 40 days we had prior to that, because in their own words this is the crucial stage. I am glad to see the Minister of National Defence coming back into the House, perhaps to take a bow, because the words were his. This is a crucial stage, and the opportunity to have the kind of debate that is alluded to at page 433 of the *Journals* for 1968-69 has been denied.

The third thing I want to say is that in my view this Parliament, with the work load it has, and with the way that work load will increase, does have to find some way to plan and allocate its time.

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

**Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre):** But it has to be done in a way that involves agreement, and it has to be done in a way that apportions the time within any period of allocated time so that all of the time will not be spent on one clause and none of it on the rest. But every time the government uses the closure device, uses the big stick, it is admitting it has not been able to solve that problem. It is not the solution of any problem for the bully, for the one with the big stick, just to say, "This is the end of it." Every time this happens, every time the guillotine falls, we not only suffer in Parliament at that very moment, but we are putting off the chance of a sensible solution to this problem of the allocation of time.

So, Sir, for these three reasons that I have produced today, in addition to the three that I put forward on December 2, I urge that this motion be defeated. It violates the purpose of third reading. It is a case of open contempt of Parliament. And it is an admission on the part of the government that it has completely failed to