

they have no regard or respect for the rights and role of Parliament or its members.

The President of the Privy Council is quite correct when he said that Canadians will learn a great deal this afternoon. This is blue Friday in Canada. They will learn exactly how the Tories treat the economy and Parliament. They treat it with disdain and oftentimes ignorance. They do not really care about this particular motion.

The reason the closure motion was introduced by the President of the Privy Council is because they are in a panic. They saw the Gallup poll on Tuesday and they were frightened. That is why we have this closure motion. They are attempting to pretend that they are up to something, that they will produce Christmas goodies, which the Minister of Finance (Mr. Crosbie) is always talking about. He wants to have those presents under the Christmas tree for his friends and neighbours. That is the reason why we have this motion. It has nothing to do with whether the opposition is acting reasonably or not.

I remind members opposite of some important facts. Fact No. 1 is that the Minister of Finance introduced the basic proposal on the tax credit on September 17. Parliament could have been called at any time after that to introduce this bill. Parliament was not called for a full three weeks after, and the bill was not introduced until 41 days after Parliament had been meeting. Is that a party in a hurry? Is that the thinking of a government which says that it must get this bill through in time for Christmas? Who was dragging their feet? Who slowed down the process? Why did we wait so long to see the bill?

An hon. Member: Why did we wait so long for Chrétien's bills?

● (1510)

Mr. Axworthy: When the President of the Privy Council and Minister of National Revenue has the nerve to stand up and say, "Well, we have allowed all the debate because it is such a simple bill," I would ask since when is \$3 billion a simple matter? Since when is a measure that is going to totally distort the Canadian economy a simple matter? Since when is a bill that is going to totally discriminate against three-fifths of the Canadian population a simple matter? It takes a lot of nerve to get up and say to the Canadian people that we should treat this as an offhand gesture.

We take our job responsibly. We have suggested all through the debate that we think this is a bad piece of legislation, and we have been prepared to try to improve it. During the debate on first reading we issued the kind of amendments that we would be prepared to propose. We asked the Prime Minister (Mr. Clark) whether he was prepared to accept reasonable amendments and he said, "Of course I am prepared to accept reasonable amendments". Then the Minister of Finance said; "No, I won't accept reasonable amendments". Then the President of the Privy Council and Minister of National Revenue said; "No, I won't", and the Prime Minister said; "Yes".

Time Allocation

All this shows, Mr. Speaker, is that this is a government that pirouettes 180 degrees from Tuesday to Wednesday to Thursday, and cannot make up its own mind what it wants to do. All it is trying to do with this motion of closure is find an easy solution to its own confusion. That is the reason why we have a closure motion in front of us.

I would like to remind members opposite of some very good authorities on whether in fact a motion of this nature is required at this time. Let me quote from one of their more distinguished members who, on a bill which had far more reason for closure, when the committee stage had gone on much longer than this, used the following words:

A government is judged not only by the things it does but by the way it uses its power. . . . It is a government which now uses a form of closure to force through parliament a measure which the government knows is wrong and knows it is going to change. That is an abuse of the rules of parliament. It is an abuse of the rule of the provinces. It is an abuse of the rights of the citizens of Canada.

That same distinguished member of the Conservative party went on to say:

The use of closure is just one more indication of the incompetence of the Minister of Finance.

Truer words have never been spoken, Mr. Speaker. He went on to say that this shutting out of the right and the duty of Parliament to debate what is happening at this stage is a denial of the rights of Parliament. That distinguished member I am quoting, Mr. Speaker, is none other than the right hon. Prime Minister of this country, Joseph Clark.

An hon. Member: Joe Clark.

Mr. Axworthy: Yes, Joe Clark. How quickly they forget, Mr. Speaker. How quickly the time passes by when they forget their own words and their own admonitions. It does not take very long for members opposite to start exercising the kind of disdain or arrogance about the rights of this Parliament that really has no equal.

This bill has not been debated thoroughly. The Minister of Finance has not seen the kind of amendment that could be introduced, debated, and accepted. They were not patient or prepared to listen. Furthermore, Mr. Speaker, we gave them full opportunity. We offered to close the debate and vote on the bill well over a week ago. They are the ones who asked for an extension of three or four days. It is not members of the opposition who did that. It was members opposite who extended the time of the debate. They filibustered their own bill.

How can we be expected to treat the bill seriously when again at the committee stage we put very clear questions to the Minister of Finance about how he was going to pay for this measure, what kind of amendments he was prepared to accept, and all we got from him was the sort of down country corn pone humour which is actually getting to be pretty sad and tragic for the Canadian people? It is no longer funny when the Minister of Finance refuses to deal fairly and squarely with questions put to him, honest questions, and instead uses his poor excuse for humour to get out of his difficulties. We know