

Mr. G. W. Baldwin (Peace River): Mr. Speaker, one of the earlier speakers said something about taxes and livestock, and that reminded me of something which happened to me just a few months ago. I was up in my constituency in one of the homestead areas where there are still people working who remember the days of pioneering. One of the competitions they had at the annual fair I was at was the selection of "Mr. Homesteader" or "Mrs. Homesteader of the year." Each of the people taking part in this competition was set some tasks, and one of the tasks was to milk. They could not bring a cow into the hall, so they brought in a poor old nanny goat.

None of the six or seven people involved was experienced at milking goats, and they tackled this goat from different directions, one from one side, one from the other side, two lay underneath—and I forget what the others did. Just when it was all over I was sitting on the platform, and the nanny goat looked at me. She was bleating and looking miserable. I wondered where I had seen that face before. It was the face of the Canadian taxpayer who has been milked by the last six or seven ministers of finance. The present minister is just like the last competitor who stood, if I remember correctly, astride the goat and reached underneath searching for something to milk. He obviously did not have much experience. He only knew he was supposed to get milk out of the poor old goat, forgetting his predecessor almost milked it to death. This, as I say, was reminiscent of the present Minister of Finance (Mr. Chrétien). He does not know where he is going to get what he is after. That is the background against which this debate is taking place.

If this bill stood in isolation I would probably say that there has been enough time on the debate, but it cannot be considered in isolation. We must consider it against the background of an incompetent, inept, scandal-ridden government which has shown its inability to deal adequately with issues which confront this country, and a calendar of ineptness, indecision, corruption, and all the things we have seen manifest in this land.

● (2032)

These are the people who say, "Let's get through with this budget." They treat budgets like housewives treat paper towels and toilet paper. They tear off some and use it, wait a little while, and tear off some more. They do it in budgets, mini-budgets and legislation. There is neither rhyme or reason; no sense, no intelligence. I would guess that before this budget is finished the Minister of Finance will introduce between 12 and 20 amendments.

An hon. Member: At least.

Mr. Baldwin: The hon. members who were in this House at the time Mr. Benson was minister of finance at the time the famous bill that was brought in concerning the white paper and the new approach to taxation, will recall that bill was debated at very great length to the accompaniment of screams

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of anger from the government who said that we were taking too much time. Before that debate was concluded, hundreds of amendments were introduced and hundreds more were brought out in the Senate. Hundreds more were promised. I would wager that some of the amendments we are now dealing with were contemplated by Mr. Benson, six, seven, or eight years ago, and we are still dealing with them. We will probably still be dealing with them ten years from now in the aftermath of this unfortunate measure inflicted upon this country.

Under those conditions it is essential that we in this House take the one limited remedy left to us in the course of a debate in the Committee of the Whole, and point out the inequities, the improprieties, the bad measures, and suggest that amendments should be made. Each amendment which the government may bring in may well result in a benefit to the Canadian taxpayers to the tune of hundreds of millions of dollars over a period of time. If we should take an extra five or six days in the course of this debate, as we well could and if the government would listen to us and accept the amendments which have been proposed by my colleagues, the savings to the taxpayers of Canada would be well worth the time spent.

I do not think the government will do it. It will probably introduce some amendments it has seen fit to deal with. It probably has a great many more to be processed through the bureaucracy of the Department of Finance. This is the situation. It is a sad story.

Parliament has deteriorated in its powers. It has a Minister of Finance who does not know where he comes from or where he is going. This has led to the deterioration of our parliamentary institutions, and has allowed the country to fall into decay from the point of view of national unity.

The government has failed to grapple with regional difficulties and needs. On the one hand talking about national unity, the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) travels around Canada interviewing the premiers, suggesting a third option, suggesting what should be done to bind together the wounds of our country, and at the same time the Postmaster General (Mr. Blais) makes a speech in Ottawa where he says we do not want a third option. The idea of a third option is to give to the federal government even more power than it has, to take away from the provinces some of the authority they now possess.

The government, in litigation pending before the Supreme Court, instructs its counsel through the Minister of Justice (Mr. Basford) to challenge the rights of provincial governments with respect to natural resources. This is the sort of government that comes before us asking for taxation proposals contained in this bill, and at the same time says, despite the obvious inequities, despite the fact that we intend to improve the legislation before it is finished by moving amendments, "It is not for the poor peasants in the opposition to have the opportunity for adequate debate at this particular stage." However, if this bill stood by itself in isolation, I would agree with the Minister of Finance that there has been adequate time. But you cannot do that.