

reading last night? It may be that Your Honour will find me out of court at this time, but I am rising in protest at what I think is unfortunately an error in judgment and—

Mr. Pinard: You are making one now.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The hon. member is identifying that he is directly appealing, as it were, or re-arguing a ruling that the Chair has made. He has made that quite clear. He made it in the argument when I made the ruling to start with, and I disagreed with the position he took at that time. I made it clear that the solution to the problem was optional in the Chair. There had been occasions in the past, according to precedent, in which the Chair had ordered that the matter be corrected by an amended ways and means resolution up to the time that the clause was taken into consideration. That is one of several ways to solve the problem.

In even the short time that I have been in the Chair, in similar circumstances with other bills, other ways and means resolutions, and other differences, I have ordered that the progress of the bill be stopped. In some cases the matter was amended by way of an amendment to the bill to conform with the existing ways and means resolution.

There are several solutions. On the basis of a clear precedent I chose one; whether I would choose another one in different circumstances remains to be seen. In this particular case I chose an option for the correction of the irregularity on the basis of a precedent that I cited at the time. Whether the hon. member agrees with that or calls it an error in judgment, which he just did, is of no consequence at the moment. The ruling has been made and the House is stuck with it. I happen to think it is a correct ruling and the hon. member does not, but that is academic. The House is stuck with the ruling and has proceeded on the basis of it until now. Whatever consequences might have taken place are hypothetical.

In any case, if the second reading vote was in any way out of order, as may have taken place with countless motions in the past, they may have been out of order, but once they are passed and the vote taken, there is nothing the House can do about it. The House has voted and has on its records that it now proceeds according to that vote to consideration by committee of the whole of this bill. There is no power in the Chair at this stage to turn that around on the basis of rethinking a decision it has taken previously.

With respect, the hon. member has not got around the two basic points that I gave him, the first being that he cannot change a ruling even if he disagrees with it, and the second, that we cannot do anything to reverse the result of the vote because the vote has already been taken. I do not know how we can go any further on it.

Mr. Lambert (Edmonton West): I am reserving the opportunity, on third reading debate, of referring to this matter again. I am doing it now at the first opportunity following the vote because it is still my contention that we are on the wrong path with this particular bill. We operated differently under different circumstances, and the two instances do not jive.

Income Tax Act

While I accept Mr. Speaker's ruling, no one says that I must agree with it. I do not think Mr. Speaker says that I have to agree with it.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. I do not expect the hon. member to agree with it, but I just ask him to respect it.

Pursuant to Standing Order 54 I do now leave the chair for the House to go into committee of the whole.

[*Translation*]

The House in committee of the whole on Bill C-56, to amend the statute law relating to income tax and to authorize payments related to provincial sales tax reductions—Mr. Chrétien—Mr. Laniel in the Chair.

The Chairman: The committee is now on clause 1. Shall clause 1 carry?

[*English*]

On clause 1.

Mr. Stevens: Mr. Chairman, as we know, there are 59 clauses in Bill C-56 to which the committee will undoubtedly want to give some attention. I think the two clauses of most interest, however, are clauses 30 and 59. I think it would facilitate the deliberations of this committee if, in the few moments I have available at this time, I could put some questions to the minister with respect to the current position of relations between the federal government and the government of Quebec on the income tax—sales tax rebate scheme. This has been of great concern to this House for almost two months now. With that in mind, Mr. Chairman, the Minister of Finance—

● (1602)

The Chairman: Order, please. I might try to satisfy the hon. member by saying to him that it has been the general practice, when considering clause 1 of the bill in committee of the whole, to allow members to express opinions or ask questions of a general nature. Of course the hon. member wants to direct his attention to one particular clause. I understand it is a fundamental clause as to the general policy and I think I will be ready to accept his intervention in that way.

Mr. Stevens: Mr. Chairman, as I was saying, the Minister of Finance very kindly gave us a copy of a letter which he has received from the minister of finance of the province of Quebec. As the letter is quite relevant to the consideration of Bill C-56 by this committee, I wonder if the minister would be willing to table that letter so that the entire committee of the House may have the letter for their consideration?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Chrétien: Mr. Chairman, I was pleased to hand out copies to some opposition members a while ago, so that they may examine them, and I am also pleased to table the French version only which I have just received. I do not have the English version. I did not have time to have it translated. With leave of the House, I should like to table the letter of the