

Government Orders

that this government would not accept any of the amendments whether they were innocuous or severe.

Mr. John Manley (Ottawa South): Madam Speaker, I would just like to ask the member, who has effectively pleaded with the Senate to take even stronger measures than it has in reviewing legislation such as that before us, if he does not think it is a trifle inconsistent for a party which has maintained the position that the Senate should be abolished to say that in light of the fact that it is there it should take stronger measures. Surely his theory for its abolition is based on the non-elected nature of the body. It would be therefore far more consistent for him to say that if it is not abolished the Senate should be careful not to interfere in any way with legislation that comes out of the House of Commons.

Does he not think it is rather inconsistent of him to recommend to an unelected and therefore unrepresentative body that it takes very drastic action and castigates its members for not having stopped the bill altogether although having recommended improvements?

Mr. Butland: Madam Speaker, I certainly anticipated that question, but it does not make the answer simpler or easier. I said in my speech that we are not too sure what to do with this beast, this three-headed monster, but we say that if you are there, for heaven's sakes exercise what you can do rather than bring forth wimpy, non-stringent amendments. They should make a statement. Let me assure you of our policy. I certainly agree with Mr. Knowles, who I am sure still believes very much what he said 40 years ago, although I am not supposed to do that, that the Senate has no place.

[*Translation*]

Mr. John Manley (Ottawa South): Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure to take part once more in a debate on Bill C-28. I believe that it is at least the second time I have spoken on this subject. I participated in the debate on third reading and on the legislative committee studying this bill.

[*English*]

I find it rather amusing, to say the least, to hear the NDP wax so eloquent about the pro-active role it sees for the Senate in dealing with this sort of legislation. I must say I could not disagree much more with the comments made by the member for Sault Ste. Marie.

Frankly I think that the Senate has demonstrated in the way it has dealt with this bill exactly what kind of role it should be playing: a very useful and thoughtful role without at the same time interfering totally with the government's mandate or plans.

In the case of this bill, in spite of the evidence it was able to hear in its legislative committee, which we were unable to hear in the House of Commons committee because of pressure from government members who are no longer government members, having left the governing party since then for other reasons, in spite of that pressure we had in the Senate committee the opportunity to have a very broad variety of evidence presented. The senators were able to hear the concerns of Canadians that should have been expressed to members of this House, but the government would not permit that.

The Senate then came forward with two very reasonable amendments to address two of the extreme problems with this bill. I agree with the member for Sault Ste. Marie that that does not address the essential iniquity of this bill which is to undermine the principle of universality in the most indirect, underhanded fashion.

The issue is simply whether or not Canadians should be given the opportunity to debate that fundamental principle of our social policy, universality, in a comprehensive way so that when we decide what kind of country we want to be, not just this year but this decade and the decades to come, we do so on the foundation of thorough debate in the House of Commons and hearing the views of the people of this country.

What we have in this clawback measure is a fundamental change in social policy disguised as an income tax measure. As an example of how devious the government has been in presenting this measure we had the Minister of Finance before the finance committee, not three weeks ago now, criticizing the fact that the Senate took time to study this bill and saying: "Look what they are doing. They are holding up the large corporations tax." The Minister of Finance had the nerve to come in and parade the fact that he was willing to tie together a fundamental social policy change in Canada, the end of universality, with a revenue-generating scheme, the large corporations tax, and then say that one was being thwarted by some effort at studying the other.