

Leader of the Opposition was complaining that we were not giving the money to a lot of little, poor people, as he put it. So the hon. member for Brome-Missisquoi complains that we are not giving it directly to the Minister of Finance for the province of Quebec. Indeed, two weeks ago that is what the Leader of the Opposition was saying, that we should do what Mr. Parizeau wants; in other words, give him the money. Yesterday, having thought a little more, he was not saying we should give it to Mr. Parizeau; he was saying we should dribble it out to all the little people who are not paying any income tax.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Clark: Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister has now, as I understand him, extended, for example, to the province of Alberta the proposition that has been extended to the province of Quebec, so that there would be the possibility of a direct payment by the Government of Canada to the taxpayers in the province of Alberta. He has extended to the province of Manitoba the proposition that now there will be available to the province of Manitoba some flexibility in the use of the revenues realized from this proposal that would allow the province of Manitoba, for example, if it chose—as Mr. Craik told the Minister of Finance it did choose—to use that money for job creation purposes. He is providing flexibility to the province of Quebec. Is he, in fact, providing the flexibility I have outlined to the province of Alberta and the province of Manitoba?

Mr. Trudeau: Mr. Speaker, in the case of Alberta, I think we have explained that the budget contained special provisions for that province which does not have sales taxes. Therefore, we have special provisions in the budget to help it develop its natural resources and add to the wealth of the province. That is the case in respect of Alberta. Obviously, it is in a special circumstance because it does not have sales taxes. In the case of Manitoba, answering the same question, if they want to do as we are suggesting Quebec does—in other words, when we make tax room for both provinces and we are telling Quebec that it can collect the tax if it wants, we are saying the same sort of thing to Manitoba—we are making tax room for Manitoba, and if they would prefer to collect the tax rather than have us collect it, we are agreeable to doing that if that is what they want.

In this sense, in so far as our action is concerned, we are dealing with all provinces on the same basis. In so far as what the provinces want to do with the money they get through the tax room we have given them, the Minister Finance reached an agreement with nine of the provinces and the provinces agreed to this after three weeks of talks. So I would be very surprised if because the province of Quebec, having failed to state its position before the budget, is now coming out with a scheme which tends to balkanize the Canadian market, the other provinces would want to go in the direction of that balkanization. But the Minister of Finance is certainly prepared to hear from them. I said on the first day that I was prepared to meet

Point of Order—Mr. Broadbent
with the premiers of the provinces if they want to come and discuss this.

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POINTS OF ORDER

MR. BROADBENT—REQUESTED WITHDRAWAL OF BILL C-56

Mr. Edward Broadbent (Oshawa-Whitby): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a serious point of order that falls directly from what the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) has just said and was said earlier in the question period, if I remember correctly, by both himself and the Minister of Finance (Mr. Chrétien). He has just indicated he is prepared to discuss and negotiate this important matter with the province of Quebec. I do not think I overstate the issue when I suggest that what we have before us now in Canada is potentially the most divisive piece of legislation in the past decade, and I say, “potentially”.

I would now like to put to the Prime Minister on the point of order this proposal for his consideration, if he is serious that the federal government is still prepared to negotiate this important matter with the province of Quebec. Will he ask the Deputy Prime Minister (Mr. MacEachen) the government House leader, to withdraw this measure from debate today until some kind of arrangement or agreement can possibly be reached with the province of Quebec?

Mr. Walter Baker (Grenville-Carleton): Mr. Speaker, I rise on the same point of order. Following upon what the leader of the NDP has said, in order to ease the way for the government House leader I want him to know that if it were the choice of the government, and I think it would be a wise choice, to withdraw the bill that is to be called today, we are prepared to carry on with the customs bill which was introduced on Monday so there would be no House time lost.

However, I urge the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) to consider very carefully Bill C-56, not only for the reasons that have been advanced by the leader of the NDP, but in the interests of settling a very difficult and dangerous matter in this country. I hope the Prime Minister will instruct his seatmate to withdraw this bill.

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, this is a very complex and lengthy piece of legislation. I can tell the House right now that we do not need any more time to think about it. We have discussed this in caucus and we have discussed it repeatedly in cabinet. I appreciate the concerns of members opposite, and I say that without any irony, Mr. Speaker. Members opposite, I suspect, do not understand exactly what we are doing. I think most of the questions they have asked this afternoon, including those of the leader of the NDP and of the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Clark), indicate that they probably need a bit more time to think about this and to say what they really think about it.