

Income Tax Act

The value of that debate, of course, was fully illustrated by the withdrawal by the Minister of Finance of the provisions respecting the taxing of co-operatives and credit unions. I think that was a credit to parliamentary procedure, inasmuch as public opinion, largely aroused by the opposition, I believe, and supported by some members of the government party, produced substantial and beneficial changes in the bill. I wanted to make it clear then and I want to make it clear now that I do not oppose in principle the limitation of the time of debates, even if you want to describe this limitation by the harsher expression, closure.

I believe that the conduct of parliamentary business and, indeed, the welfare of democracy sometimes require the government to use its majority to terminate a debate that has gone on long enough. It should, of course, do everything in its power to work out a consensus with the parties. That is the best policy and I hope it will be adopted when possible. I think that closure to end debate in committee of the whole was justified. On another occasion, that of the flag debate, closure was justified because that debate had dragged on day after day and nothing new was being said or could be said. Therefore I voted in favour of closure then and I would do so again in the same circumstances. I may have been wrong, but I certainly was not irrational when I supported the government in the proposal to terminate debate in Committee of the Whole.

Let me make it clear that I take a different view of the present motion. The most important and, indeed, the crucial phase of debate under our present practice is that phase we embark on during the third reading stage. I do not think it is enough to confine that debate to four days. Indeed, I think that this limitation deprives the opposition of some of its basic rights, among them being the right to present to the public alternative policies by way of a series of reasoned amendments. I think this right is being taken away by the motion that is now before the House and therefore I think the rights of the opposition in that respect are being circumscribed. This, in my opinion, is in no way a justified, useful or valid application of the rule regarding allocation of time. In my opinion that rule is being abused. This motion constitutes an abuse of the rules of this House. It is an abuse of the legislative rights of the opposition. I speak for my colleague, the hon. member for Waterloo, who shared my opinion in the previous debate, when I say that we cannot and will not support the motion.

May I summarize the position I take. The issue, in my view, should not be whether closure is always wrong or always right. The issue ought to be whether it is justified by the circumstances, whether it is necessary in the interests of parliamentary rights and whether or not it is being used to abuse and curtail the rights of minorities. On this occasion it is my view that closure is being used to curtail unreasonably and unjustly the rights of minorities. I therefore oppose the motion.

• (3:30 p.m.)

Mr. John M. Reid (Kenora-Rainy River): Mr. Speaker, if anything can demonstrate the sad condition into which this Parliament has fallen, it has to be these two debates on allocation of time motions. It seems that the only time

we have had a substantial number of members in the House listening to debate and the only time we have had debate we could listen to have been occasions of procedural motions. This would seem to be an indication of the failure of the opposition to make the House of Commons a meaningful place for debate to which the country would listen.

We have had a number of rather unfounded charges slipping through the House of Commons of late. The most notable was by the Leader of the Official Opposition (Mr. Stanfield) and is to be found at page 10078 of *Hansard* for Thursday, December 2, 1971. He said:

The bill—

Bill C-259.

—was not distributed to our principal financial critic until two or three days before the House reconvened, and the rest of us did not receive a printed copy of the bill until after the House had resumed.

Now, what are the facts? The facts are that on July 12 the bill was distributed to all members of the House of Commons.

Some hon. Members: No.

Mr. Reid: Mr. Speaker, I repeat for the benefit of hon. members opposite that on July 12 the bill was distributed to all members of the House.

Mr. Baldwin: On a question of privilege, Mr. Speaker I did not get it on July 12. I did not get it until after the House had assembled. The member must take my word on that.

Mr. Reid: Mr. Speaker, the information I have—and I have done some research on this—is that the bill was distributed to all members of the House of Commons and Senate on July 12.

Mr. Stanfield: Mr. Speaker, on a question of privilege, we heard this sort of thing a minute ago. Is the hon. member questioning the word of the hon. member for Peace River or is he prepared to accept the word of the hon. member for Peace River?

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The hon. member has made his statement and the hon. member for Peace River has made his statement. If the Leader of the Opposition is asking whether the hon. member for Kenora-Rainy River is questioning the word of the hon. member for Peace River, this is debate.

Mr. Reid: I want to make quite clear that the bill was distributed on July 12 and that a number of copies were distributed to hon. members. I went to the trouble of checking when my bill came. I am certainly not known as a government financial muscle man and I assumed the bill must have been made available to members of the opposition at the same time. I can understand why the hon. member for Edmonton West (Mr. Lambert) might not be able to find his copy because he is not as adequately served by staff as some hon. members opposite such as the leaders of the opposition parties. I cannot understand how the Leader of the Opposition, who has sufficient staff, could lose the bills in his office. I can see them going