

Energy

That lack of courtesy makes it very difficult to accomplish the business of the House with some dispatch. I hope the people of Canada will recognize that as we go into this campaign and when the government makes its usual claims about the business of the House being too slow because of the irresponsible opposition. The people will realize that the business of the House is controlled by the government, and normal courtesy from their side would have a lot to do with the speedy passage of legislation.

More important than the question of courtesy is the fact that I was deceived, deliberately deceived—deliberate is difficult to establish—but certainly deceived in regard to certain aspects of the bill. I am referring, Mr. Speaker, to proposed section 65.13 in clause 1 of the bill which, as the bill was originally reported from second reading, would have allowed the governor in council to exempt domestic production from this special levy. My original objection to this on behalf of my party was with regard to this ministerial discretion again. We felt it was important that there should be parliamentary involvement at least in one step or another.

I was then approached by the minister and asked if I would mind if that whole clause was dropped and whether or not that would satisfy my concerns. I indicated that if that was what the government wanted it would be fine, that it satisfied my concern. Subsequently, I became aware of some companies in the petrochemical business which had a desire for the retention of this clause because they felt they had a case for special exemption. I asked in committee whether the government, the minister, deputies or officials were in receipt of any applications for special exemption under that clause. I was told they had not been in receipt of any applications.

Since I had in my hand a copy of two such applications, I was able to challenge the reply immediately, which I did. As a result of that challenge, I found out there were five petrochemical companies which had applied for exemption under that particular clause of the bill. Now, Mr. Speaker, lack of courtesy is going to bring the business of this House to a grinding halt, but deceit will guarantee that nothing happens. I resent bitterly being lied to in that fashion by whomever is responsible.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Turner): The Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources (Mr. Gillespie) on a point of order.

Mr. Gillespie: Mr. Speaker, I am not sure if the hon. member intended to use the language that I thought I heard him use. I would suggest that he be given a chance to withdraw that word. It is a well recognized practice in this House that that word shall not be used.

I would also suggest that if he were to re-read the record, the hon. member would find no reason to suggest there has been deception. I do not think that he has chosen to report very accurately on the record.

Mr. Andre: I have in fact, Mr. Speaker, reported very accurately on the record. The choice of language I will withdraw, but the fact that I was deceived as to what had

[Mr. Andre.]

happened—and it was only as a result of having independent evidence come to me from a separate source—is not something that I will withdraw because that is in fact what happened. If two of these companies had not given me copies of the submissions they made to the government, I would never have been aware of them, and, therefore, would never have been able to determine what in fact had happened.

● (1602)

My good friend and colleague, the hon. member for Peace River (Mr. Baldwin), has led a long crusade for freedom of information. I was convinced long before that incident of the need for a freedom of information act but, if I had any doubts, they ended there. If a member of parliament requires separate collaborating evidence from an external source to get an accurate answer to a question, then our democracy is in deep difficulty.

Related to that question on that clause is a very important question, and that is the nature of the request—

Mr. Gillespie: On the same point of order, Mr. Speaker, there is a suggestion by the hon. member for Calgary Centre (Mr. Andre) that steps were taken to conceal information from him regarding submissions made to the government. He specifically referred to petrochemical companies. I should like to ask him if at any time he asked whether that information had been provided and had received contrary information. My recollection of the events is that he asked whether that information had come forward. Some information had come forward, not to me or the department, but to the committee, and that was dealt with that day. It had come in that day. He also asked whether my department had received information and was told that it had.

Mr. Stanfield: Mr. Speaker, with all respect, the minister did not rise on a point of order. He rose to make a point in debate and abused the rules of the House by virtue of his position.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Turner): Order, please. I would suggest to all hon. members that the offensive language has already been withdrawn and now there is a dispute as to facts. The hon. member for Calgary Centre (Mr. Andre).

Mr. Andre: Mr. Speaker, I stand behind the facts as I presented them because they are accurate. My exact words were: "Is the minister in receipt of submissions from any companies in respect of this clause?" I was told no; then I—

Mr. Gillespie: That was accurate.

Mr. Andre: What is strange about that is that the minister's chief official, when I challenged him and said I had a couple of copies of the documents—I was then informed—and then the deputy minister informed the minister that there were five companies which had petitioned the minister in that regard. Had I not been in receipt of two of these I would not have known about the other three. I guess that is a warning to anybody dealing with this particular government, albeit a