

*Customs Tariff*

using an order in council to validate or attempt to validate the collection of taxes. In the terms of the order in council—and the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles) has put them on the record—it is stated that these taxes shall be deemed to be valid as though the legislation had been passed.

We know in what contempt this administration holds the house. We know their impatience with democracy. We know what they are going to propose with regard to the rules of this house whereby only one group of 25 to 29 men will count. The order in council was not a proposal made by the house but by the government. Hon. members on the other side who are not members of the treasury must keep in mind that they are not part of the government; they are only part of a government majority and members of the House of Commons no more and no less than hon. members opposite. Hon. members who sit in the rump and are the clamorous section of this house must also realize they are not members of the government. In spite of this we have this particular attempt of last April. I want to warn the house of this and draw it to the attention of those people who are supposed to comment about irregularities in the procedures of the house and in government. They should pay attention to matters of this kind rather than to some of the trivia reported about this administration such as the description of the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) swinging on a pole in Yorkville. They should report what was done here last April when this order in council was passed. This is a precedent which might be resorted to again. Unsatisfactory or unacceptable tax proposals might be brought forward in this way by the back door.

● (3:20 p.m.)

Even if parliament had been dissolved, Mr. Speaker, the same action could have been taken in regard to that infamous occasion following the income tax bill. An order in council could have been passed under the authority of the Financial Administration Act, which I suggest is a highly questionable procedure. The tax proposal of last spring which was defeated in this house could actually have been implemented under the guise and authority of an order in council validating the collection of taxes thereunder as though the legislation itself had been passed. But even if the house had been dissolved, no doubt another tame majority would have come along and swept the matter under the rug.

This is the way this administration is trying to trample on the rights of the members of this house.

A great deal is made, Mr. Speaker, of responsible government. I suggest to you that the word "responsible" is being given the wrong meaning. It is a question of acting responsibly, in other words, that the government is credible. In addition, and principally, the treasury benches must be responsible; in other words, they must account to this house for their actions. Yet here, there and at every turn the government is striving to remove accountability and responsibility. The government is becoming responsible to its own dignity, to the dictates of the one man who leads it; I will have more to say about this later during the session.

In our system of government in the western democracies, Mr. Speaker, there is not one man as powerful as the Prime Minister of Canada. In Britain the Prime Minister is even more powerful, in a political science sense, than is the President of the United States. The President of the United States is surrounded by checks and counterbalances; in Canada there are none of these. In Britain the House of Lords acted as a check on the government but now its powers are being restricted. That is again evidence of the same pattern. One must weep at what the administration has done to the democratic, responsible system of government which once existed at Westminster. That parliament has now become the tool of the administration.

My point is, Mr. Speaker, that this legislation was validated last April by order in council, and it is relevant to show how this government has acted in the context of discussing the change of duty on tequilla that is provided for in this bill. Since the excise tax bill is raising the duty on beer and spirits generally, I do not think I need say more at this time because the excise bill itself has been accepted. As a result there are consequential amendments to the Customs Tariff Act.

With regard to the Kennedy round, Mr. Speaker, I think members in all corners of the house welcome the end result, or what is anticipated to be the end result, of the negotiations. We hope that the same spirit continues, notwithstanding some very disquieting reactions in certain countries. We have heard from the common market countries, as a result of the exigencies of international financial crises, talk of border taxes, further countervailing duties on imports, and that