

legislation or Orders in Council which do not enjoy parliamentary scrutiny unless they are elevated to the point of attention by this particular committee. I was very concerned about the workability of the Standing Joint Committee on Regulations and Other Statutory Instruments. There is a sense in which I want to commend the committee for bringing forward this matter. At the same time, I am concerned about the fact that the committee did it. I really think that committee members have overblown the case here. They are taking a subject, which may even be of some legitimate concern, and are overblowing it to the point of making it look frivolous in the context of what they ought to be doing.

Let us assume there was a 17-day gap between January 1 and January 17 when the Order in Council might have been printed. I would also assume that had the Minister of Finance (Mr. Wilson) brought down his economic statement in November and published the Orders in Council at the same time, the Hon. Member for York Centre would have complained about the Government bulldozing its way through Parliament. He would have indicated that surely an economic statement deserved some attention and debate in Parliament, and that Orders in Council should flow from that debate and be registered thereafter. He cannot have it both ways. On the one hand he cannot allow for full parliamentary debate and examination of that statement and for Parliament to ventilate its concerns and, on the other hand, expect the regulations to be printed at the same time.

In his opening statement—and I think I am quoting the co-chairman accurately—he said that it was an unusual use of the powers of Government. Previous speakers have pointed out that plenty of notice was given to the public. A news release was sent out on November 8 defining for the Canadian public the terms under which the new programs would work. There was another one on November 9 in which the Minister announced that the lower rate of contributions would be implemented effective January 1, 1985. I can tell the Hon. Member, from the responses I received from the industry, that it was well informed about the Government's procedures and intentions. It was not that the public was being ignored or taken by surprise. There was another announcement on November 16 elaborating on the program. It is really overstating the case when the Hon. Member says that it was an unusual use of the powers of Government.

Also, as a member of the parliamentary reform committee, I caution the members of this committee to use wisely these powers which are long overdue and which many of us wanted. Again I say that this is somewhat a frivolous motion because they could have tabled this particular report under the provisions of Standing Order 44. It would then have forced the Government into a change of the regulations. The Committee chose not to do that. It chose to criticize the procedure, tabled a report and asked for a two-hour debate to talk about the report. But as a result, nothing happens. Time and the effects of the program are already past. Why take up two hours of House time debating a report which will change nothing

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because the program has already lapsed, and there is plenty of evidence to indicate that there was no injury to the public as a result. The public was properly informed. Probably all of the applicants or intended applicants had a choice whether or not they wanted to take part in the program.

● (1240)

I would caution the Standing Joint Committee on Regulations and Other Statutory Instruments in respect of its use of the powers which are the committee's which happily now allow the committee to bring about changes in Government regulations in order to correct an injustice. This could not be done before the reform was accepted by the House. Up until February any time this committee sat, all it could do was ventilate an issue but nothing happened. Under the reform of the House of Commons, the committee now tables a report under S. O. 44, which I will read into the record:

—if the report is concurred in, would be An Order of this House to the Ministry to rescind one specified regulation or other statutory instrument, which the Ministry has the authority to rescind.

That puts muscle to a report, Mr. Speaker. What the committee has chosen to do is to table a report which has absolutely no muscle to it and has consumed two hours of debating time, time which could have been spent much more wisely on something else. I would caution the committee to continue its work investigating all of these regulations and other statutory instruments, but to make sure that when it does report to the House that the committee does it with some purpose rather than with the present frivolity.

Mr. Robinson: Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Hon. Member with respect to his earlier remarks on PC-1305, the emergency planning order. He will recall that when he was an opposition Member on this side of the House he called upon the then Liberal Government to repeal that order immediately. He suggested that it was a serious threat to the civil liberties of all Canadians. Now that the Hon. Member for Surrey—White Rock—North Delta (Mr. Friesen) is a Government Member, it seems that he is singing a different tune. Instead of calling upon his own Government to repeal this same order immediately, which remains on the books in the identical form in which the Liberals passed, he is now saying: "These things take time. The Minister is studying it. It takes a couple of years. The Associate Minister of National Defence (Mr. Andre) has to study it very carefully". What hypocrisy, Mr. Speaker.

How can the Hon. Member possibly justify the total inaction of his own Government with respect to the emergency planning order? Why is he now saying that it is all right for his Government to study the matter and to take another 15 months or two years to look into it in depth? When the Hon. Member was in opposition he was suggesting that this was one of the greatest threats to civil liberties in the country. Why, all of a sudden, is the Hon. Member saying now that the Government needs more time to study? How can he justify the reversal of his policy?