

Adjournment Debate

and income levels, two considerations which do not quite square with the notion of isolation.

The Treasury Board instructions and the remission orders have been with us for a number of years, and experience has shown that they have passed the test of time and are readily accepted by the residents involved. They also happen to be the best means to implement the new tax system in northern regions.

Madam Speaker, I received a number of communications from residents of communities which are uneligible for benefits and which are located close to eligible communities. This situation has nothing to do with existing instructions. This problem of borders would still be there regardless of criteria. My departmental assistants have considered a good many options but were unable to find an acceptable solution. The matter needs further consideration, and this is why the Minister suggested that a task force might review the relevancy of criteria and make appropriate recommendations.

Madam Speaker, we must not lose sight of the justification for this policy: a fairer tax system has been set up for northern regions because the old system did have serious drawbacks. It provided generous tax incentives for workers who were paid rather big housing allowances by their employers, but not for the self-employed, retired people, and workers who did not get such allowances.

Generally speaking, the new tax system for northern communities is much more generous and much more equitable. This policy is our response to the existing problems and high housing costs, and it contributes to the economic development of Canada's northern and isolated communities.

Satisfied though the majority of residents involved may be with this measure, the Minister remains fully prepared to listen to reservations expressed about the eligibility criteria. I am confident that we will find a satisfactory solution to this problem. We will give this matter top priority, and announcements should be made very soon, Madam Speaker.

● (1740)

[*English*]

Mr. Hawkes: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. The House was very quick in dealing with Private Members' Hour today. There was unanimous consent to call it six o'clock somewhat earlier than usual.

I think that created a problem for one Member who wanted to participate in the adjournment debate. He has not yet arrived in the House. Could we perhaps suspend the sitting for a few moments in order to give him an opportunity to arrive and participate in the debate which was agreed to earlier today?

Mr. Parry: Madam Speaker, yesterday I was in the same situation as the Hon. Member's colleague, whereby upon arriving at the House yesterday I observed the Mace leaving by the rear door. In fact, I was unable to participate in the adjournment debate.

I might offer as a suggestion, while I take up a little time in order for our hon. colleague to make it here, that perhaps instruction could be given that some assistant to the Clerk at the Table in future notify directly those Members who are slated to participate in the adjournment debate proceedings.

I realize that it would be ideal if Members were monitoring the proceedings of the House on a continuous basis. That had been my intention yesterday until I discovered that my television had broken down and was unable to observe Private Members' Hour, and therefore had not noted that it had drawn to a close earlier yesterday as it did today.

Given the circumstances, I would certainly be agreeable to the sitting being suspended, as my hon. friend suggested. In the long run, there are some administrative measures that might be taken to prevent a repetition.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Champagne): I thank both the Parliamentary Secretary and the Hon. Member for their comments. I must say that because Private Members' Hour was dealt with quickly, I decided not to look at the order in which Hon. Members were to be recognized in the adjournment debate. I would have recognized the Hon. Member for Scarborough West (Mr. Stackhouse) had he arrived at any time. There was a tentative approach to reach Hon. Members and Parliamentary Secretaries to notify them that proceedings today would finish earlier than usual. Unfortunately, I guess no one could reach the Hon. Member. As he is someone who shows a lot of assiduity in the House, I am sure he will have the opportunity to raise this point again.

The motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly, this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 2 p.m., pursuant to Standing Order 3(1).

The House adjourned at 5.45 p.m.