

Business of the House

a tax bill as voluminous as this one and as confusing to the people of Canada as this one, is too important a piece of legislation to be passed under closure.

An hon. Member: It is too important to pass, eh?

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): May I come back to the first of my three points. I firmly believe that there are times when we must allocate the time of this House, organize our business and get on with the job that is before us. But I suggest, Sir, that we have proven over the years that this can be done by understanding and by agreement. I suggest that even with respect to this important bill, contentious though it is, there have been many unanimous agreements among the House leaders. We have determined the amount of time that should be spent on certain subject areas. These agreements have been announced in a low key to the House and have been accepted. I believe it would have been far better to continue in that way and to achieve an end to this debate by agreement and by understanding instead of by the use of the big stick unilaterally wielded by the government. I suggest that the announcement the President of the Privy Council made in the course of his remarks proves my point. We in this party welcome enthusiastically the announcement he made to the effect that the government will make amendments improving the situation with respect to credit unions and co-operatives. How has that come about?

Mr. Alexander: That is the question.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): It has come about because of free debate.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): It has come about because of free debate in which hon. members in all parties in the House took part. I give credit to the hon. member for Essex (Mr. Whelan), to the hon. member for Gloucester (Mr. Breau) and to the hon. member for Fort William (Mr. Badanai), as well as to others on the government side of the House who took part in that debate. As a result of that debate—since there was no time limit we could make our points and drive them home—the government has seen the light and the welcome announcement was made by the minister today. He is pointing to himself. He wants credit for what he did as well, and I give it to him.

An hon. Member: He needs it.

Mr. Lambert (Edmonton West): It was part of the deal.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): The point is that when debate is free, that kind of thing can happen. I suggest that from now until a quarter to six on Wednesday the debate in the Committee of the Whole stage will not be free. We will just be riding out the time. There will be no yielding by the government on any other points. Many amendments that opposition members might wish to make will never be made because there are 707 pages to the bill and many sections and subsections have not been discussed and will not be reached. Yet at 5.45 p.m. next Wednesday the 100 or so amendments moved by the Minister of National Revenue and many sections which have

[Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre).]

not even been debated will have to be voted on one by one. That is not free debate. That is not dealing with legislation in the proper way. I reject it completely.

I insist that the opposition party House leaders have the right to say that we have given the government a good run of co-operation. Here I give credit to the President of the Privy Council as well. He has been a good government House leader in the sense that he has been very co-operative. We have done well during the last two or three years. I do not know why he has to reverse that process and use the big stick with respect to this piece of legislation. That is my first point, Mr. Speaker. This is the wrong way to do it. There is a better way, and it has worked time and time again. I wish that this House would stick with the better way.

The second point I announced when I first started was that it is a matter of historical fact that every time we get into one of these situations in which closure is imposed, ill will develops. We have already seen it in the House yesterday and today. The danger is that this sort of thing will continue. When it does, we do not see Parliament at its best. I do not mind confrontation. I like it. I do not mind the cut and thrust of debate. I like it; I like debate to go back and forth. But when we get to the stage of chaos, furore and good will, that just is not Parliament.

An hon. Member: Shouldn't that be ill will?

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Yes, that should read as ill will. So far as what will happen between now and a quarter to six on Wednesday is concerned, why, we might as well take the vote now because the kind of Parliament we are used to within our experience will not be operating. Even so, even though this has begun to happen after it was announced that closure would be put into effect, even though it has already started in this case, I stand here as a member of the opposition and plead that we not do that and that we not operate in that way. We have only so much time left for the tax bill. Let us spend that time on the bill. Let us deal with as many sections as we can. Let us not have too many sideshows or too many diversions. Let us not lose any of the time it is proposed to allot to us.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): The third thing I wish to say, Mr. Speaker, as I indicated at the beginning, is this. Speaking as one who has never been willing to support closure, I think there is a particularly strong case against closure with respect to this bill. Nothing so affects all the people in the country as a tax bill. Everybody has to pay taxes one way or another, directly or indirectly. This bill has about it many misunderstandings. There is much confusion about it. In the course of the next year or so after this bill is put into effect there is bound to be a good deal of feeling against its provisions. If the Canadian people remember when they fill out their income tax forms and pay their taxes that this bill was imposed upon them under closure, they will feel even more bitter about it.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!