

Income Tax Act

limitation of time has been imposed or that we have had a long and tedious debate. The real tragedy is the abdication of responsibility on the part of the official opposition to give a clear indication of where it stands in respect of tax reform.

[Translation]

Hon. Martial Asselin (Charlevoix): Mr. Speaker, in his speech the member who spoke before me did the best he could to apologize to the House for what he said in Thunder Bay, Ontario, yesterday; in any event, his assertion was false. Obviously, Mr. Speaker, we have to take his word for it in view of the Standing Orders of this House. But when newspapers report that he said such and such, and when we can check his comments by listening to tapes, I say that, in reciting his *mea culpa* tonight, in trying to convince his party colleagues not to be afraid, and claiming that it was not what he said, he merely wants to reingratiate himself with his leader, the right hon. Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau). I admire that hon. member very much, but in trying to build an argument by humiliating the leader of the official opposition (Mr. Stanfield) who has loyally tried to fight against a bill which in his mind is not acceptable to the Canadian people, I say the hon. member has shown unforgivable weakness.

• (8:20 p.m.)

[English]

Mr. Roberts: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a question of privilege. I do not believe that in my remarks I referred to the insincerity of the Leader of the Opposition. If I did do that in inadvertence, I certainly withdraw it.

Mr. Nesbitt: It was not in inadvertence.

[Translation]

Mr. Asselin: Mr. Speaker, I take note of the hon. member's apologies that will be transmitted to the leader of the official opposition in proper time and place.

Mr. Speaker, I rise to speak tonight to give my wholehearted support to the honest and loyal fight our party led against the bill now before us. Government members do not seem to be aware that when the opposition makes suggestions to the House or criticizes a legislative measure, it does so because it represents 50 per cent of the Canadian population.

Contrary to what the previous speaker said, the opposition, particularly the official opposition, feels it has accomplished its duty. It took its responsibilities, particularly in a difficult fight, at a time when we had to be concerned with the overall economic activity of Canadians.

I would like to thank the leader of the official opposition who did not hesitate to step forward and lead the charge against the white paper introduced by the Minister of Finance. He has not worked in vain because the Minister of Finance (Mr. Benson), immediately after meeting with Canadian businessmen to explain to them the whole impact of the bill before us, agreed that some provisions had to be withdrawn and some suggestions and advice given by the leader of the opposition could be accepted.

Mr. Speaker, I know it is not easy to administer the federal Department of Finance.

In fact, when the Prime Minister appoints an hon. member as Minister of Finance he is more or less sending him to the stake. While opposition members sometimes speak harsh words to the Minister of Finance, these are primarily addressed to the government, which has called upon him to bring forward the bill we are now considering.

We are entitled to make suggestions. And when the hon. member who spoke before me said our party has no fiscal policy he should just peruse *Hansard* and read there all the amendments and suggestions we submitted during the debate in an effort to improve the legislation the Minister of Finance has introduced in the House.

Mr. Joseph-Philippe Guay (Saint-Boniface): That's a good one.

Mr. Asselin: Mr. Chairman, the hon. member for St. Boniface often makes comments. I hold him in high esteem because he is a French-Canadian from the West, but we would like him to rise when he speaks. Let him make a good speech and we will listen to him. If he makes sense, we shall applaud him.

Mr. Chairman, I readily admit that the majority in this House has the right to govern and may go as far as applying Standing Order 75C in order to force a bill through. But I object to the manner in which the government has applied that Standing Order if 200 clauses of the bill and 100 amendments moved by the government are set aside, if we do not have time to look fully into them, and the government merely says: Since the bill must come into force on January 1st, we must apply Standing Order 75C, bring out the steam-roller and try to muzzle the opposition.

Mr. Speaker, such is the government's responsibility. The people will decide whether it was logical for the government to ask the opposition to adopt this bill when 200 sections have not been studied in committee of the whole nor have the 100 amendments that the government wanted to propose. The people will have to judge the actions of the government when they are called upon to express their views on its policies.

Why this haste, Mr. Speaker, to put the Act into force on January 1? Does the Minister of Finance need money in a hurry? Is he following the orders of his officials who have given him this deadline of January 1? At any rate I cannot accept that the Minister of Finance should go to the other place and tell the senators: We shall send you the bill, study it quickly and have faith in me; we shall bring in amendments later.

This means that the legislative proposal of the Minister of Finance is not perfect, and that is why we were asking the government to give us more time to study it.

• (8:30 p.m.)

Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Official Opposition rightly denounced yesterday some aspects of the bill stating that the government was creating a tax jungle. It is so true, as I said a moment ago, that the Minister of Finance will be unable, as I will be myself, to file his own income tax return next year, this tax maze being full of inconsistencies and interpretation problems.