

Mr. Nystrom: Many, many ministers of finance have claimed that they were not given much time to consider the proposal. Apparently the Minister of Finance had a telephone conversation, for example, with one of the provincial ministers of finance and said, "Look, I have a budget coming up in two weeks. I have a proposal for you. Do you accept it or not?" He was like the big godfather standing up with a bit of federal money.

The province of Quebec wanted to make a special arrangement with the federal government, similar to the arrangements which were made with Saskatchewan, Alberta, British Columbia, and the Atlantic provinces. I come to the same conclusion which I arrived at a few minutes ago. Why did the minister not wait until an agreement had been reached with all provinces? If such an agreement could not be reached, why could the minister not be flexible? Why did he turn down the offer of Mr. Parizeau?

Mr. Dupras: Mr. Parizeau waited until two days after the budget was tabled.

Mr. Nystrom: Mr. Parizeau waited 48 hours before taking a position. So what? He was taking a position on something which is under his jurisdiction and his authority. Sales tax comes under the provincial laws of this country.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

[*Translation*]

Mr. Boulanger: Mr. Chairman, I would like to go back for a moment to the ruling you made a moment ago. It is easy to see now that the members of the official opposition, like the others, do not have the slightest desire to discuss the bill clause by clause. They want to do today what they did not have time to do yesterday or the day before, or two months ago. The soundness of your ruling is easy to see, and I accept it, but at the same time it is clear that they are taking advantage of the opportunity given by this ruling—I do not want to make the situation more complicated—but we could discuss this ruling at great length. They take advantage of a ruling you made precisely to take unfair advantage of it, simply to engage in a filibuster, and this shows that the members of the opposition are not serious, but just a bunch of actors.

The Chairman: I would like to point out to the hon. member that what he is raising is a point of debate. He is entitled to his opinion. The Chair is not here to pass judgment on speeches, but to apply the rules. I said earlier that, under our practice, there is a general debate on clause 1, and I have here a ruling made by chairman Batten of the committee of the whole on February 15, 1968. He had this to say then:

[*English*]

The usual procedure, of course, is to have the general debate on clause 1, assuming that clause 1 is not just a short title. However, if it is the wish of the committee to have a general debate on the bill under clause 4, there is no reason at all why that should not be done. If the general debate is to be on clauses 4 and

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5, or either of these clauses, I would ask members of the committee to confine their remarks in connection with clauses 1, 2 and 3 to those actual clauses.

If my interpretation is correct, the government House leader at the time, Mr. Sharp, intervened in this procedure and addressed himself to the Chairman. He is reported as saying the following:

Mr. Chairman, it seems to me that clauses 1, 2 and 3 are of a purely technical character and if there are to be remarks of a general nature such as has been suggested by the hon. member for Edmonton West they could quite appropriately be made on clauses 4 and 5. The first three clauses are merely technical in character.

This means that it is a question of interpretation by the Chair. If clause 1 is just a short title, or if it is a specific clause and the first clause to be considered, it is a clause on which there can be general debate in committee, and all latitude should be given to hon. members to use the time of the committee to express their feelings or points of view.

Mr. Nystrom: Mr. Chairman, once again it has been necessary for Your Honour to tell government members what the rules are. There can be a general discussion on clause 1. My intention was to talk about two or three matters, but so far I have dealt only with the sales tax provision.

The government has indicated that Mr. Parizeau made up his mind two days after the budget came down. So what? Sales tax is totally under provincial jurisdiction and authority. If Mr. Parizeau did not want to make up his mind, so what?

Mr. Lachance: It is mixed jurisdiction.

Mr. Nystrom: I hear a Liberal backbencher indicating that sales tax comes under a mixed jurisdiction. That is not correct. Even the Minister of Finance would not say that.

Mr. Lachance: I challenge you on that.

Mr. Nystrom: The hon. member can challenge me if he so desires. He has the right to rise in the House and make a speech or a statement concerning how the retail sales tax can suddenly become an area of mixed jurisdiction. I am sure even the Minister of Finance would be embarrassed by that comment on the part of one of his backbenchers.

At any rate, Mr. Parizeau had the right to do what he did. This is an area which falls under provincial jurisdiction. He decided to use the money which was coming to Quebec in a manner that would help the people of Quebec the most. He chose to eliminate taxes on five sectors altogether. So what? That is his right. He can spend that money in the manner he sees fit.

The government of Saskatchewan decided to implement a 2 per cent reduction over nine months, rather than a 3 per cent reduction over six months. They had various global Saskatchewan reasons for doing so. The federal government bought that proposition, as well as the proposition of the province of British Columbia. Why did the government not accept Quebec's proposition? Because its proposition came two days after the budget was tabled does not matter.