

Income Tax Act

the civil servants do, particularly the decisions they make, rests upon the government. Time and again the hon. member for Greenwood and other members of the Progressive Conservative party have pointed out and have in fact tried to get behind what ministers were saying to the decisions made under their direction by their officials in various departments. I submit that if members of the Progressive Conservative party are going to assert one day their lack of confidence in the government, as they did on another motion yesterday, it is strange that they turn around today and ask us to affirm confidence in that same government.

Similarly, I was surprised that the hon. member for Greenwood took the stand that secrecy should prevail with respect to matters of this kind. He and his colleagues, and some of us in this party, time and again try to get through the veil of secrecy we are up against in this house. We try to get the curtain lifted. We try to get information as to what is going on in government departments and crown corporations. Lo and behold, when it comes to private corporations the hon. member for Greenwood wants to roll down the curtain of secrecy that he tries to roll up when public bodies are under consideration.

I may say that I was also somewhat astounded at the question directed by the hon. member for Prince Albert to the Minister of National Revenue at the end of the speech made by the minister. In my bill I am asking for some relaxation of the secrecy provisions, but I discover that the hon. member for Prince Albert wants to go in the opposite direction and make the secrecy provisions even stricter. He wants to have the law amended so that even the courts of the land cannot get at some of this information. When I think of the many speeches the hon. member for Prince Albert makes in the house glorifying the courts of our land, when I think of the times he rejoices in the fact that no matter what the government may do we have the courts to fall back on, I must say I am astounded that he now wants the legislation to be tightened up so that even the courts cannot get at information of this kind, no matter what issue might be at stake.

The hon. member for Greenwood suggested to me that I should not be pressing this bill since I said that it arises in part out of case No. 227 because, as he put it, in that case the claim for deductibility was denied. He and I are both satisfied with what the department and the income tax appeal board have done in that case; so he said: why not let the matter rest? I took it from his remarks that he read the entire debate the day this matter was up a while ago, and if so he must have read the

remarks of my colleague the hon. member for Dauphin (Mr. Zaplitny), who pointed out that there are four large corporations in the province of Quebec which were given income tax rebates totalling some \$2 million under circumstances to which the hon. member for Dauphin appropriately applied the word "fishy".

It seems to me if the hon. member for Greenwood is going to be satisfied on the one count he should tell us what he thinks of this other situation. Here we have a case where, even when the matter was still pending before the courts, the government made a settlement with these corporations amounting to a rebate of some \$2 million. When the hon. member for Dauphin brought down a motion seeking the correspondence so we could find out how the deal was made, he was denied that correspondence on the ground of the secrecy provision in the Income Tax Act. I think it is noteworthy that the hon. member for Greenwood and the Minister of National Revenue made no reference to that case which was presented to the house so clearly and so forcefully by the hon. member for Dauphin.

The hon. member for Greenwood, in one of the lighter moments of the speech he made, suggested that we should not accept this bill, applying as it does to corporations, lest I find some way next year to extent its provisions to individuals. I can assure the hon. member that if I had wanted the provisions of the bill to cover individuals as well as corporations I would have included individuals as well as corporations in the bill now before the house. It is precisely because I think the lifting in part at least of the secrecy provision should apply only to corporations that I worded the bill specifically to that effect.

So, Mr. Speaker, I say I am somewhat amazed at the line of argument followed by the hon. member for Greenwood and at the implications of the question put by the hon. member for Prince Albert; because I would have thought I would get support for this measure from my friends to the right who have doubts about the government across the way and who are forever, along with some of the rest of us, trying to get the veil of secrecy lifted.

I turn now, Mr. Speaker,—

Mr. Diefenbaker: We want the veil of secrecy lifted from the Canadian National, not the government; that is what we are asking.

Mr. Knowles: It all depends upon whether it is the Canadian National or Canadian Pacific at which my friends are looking. If it is the Canadian National, they want the