

Routine Proceedings

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): I said as soon as possible.

The hon. member for Essex—Windsor.

Mr. Steven W. Langdon (Essex—Windsor): Mr. Speaker, I speak as a member of the finance committee which was engaged in the study of this bill.

The points that I want to put in front of you, in addition to those which my House leader has so ably explained, are points which refer to the effects within committee of the ruling which was placed to control committee activity by the chair of the committee. It was a ruling which, certainly in our view, made it extremely difficult for there to be valid and full consideration of Bill C-62 to be given within the committee, as was required when it was referred to it by this House.

The points that I want to refer to are four in number. The first is to buttress the point which my House leader has put forward.

It should be quite clearly seen by you, Mr. Speaker, and by the House that after the statements referred to by which the chair imposed a certain order of procedure, which he thereafter referred to as the Lachance rule, the Speaker in his ruling on the matter this week made it quite clear that there was no precedent to be attached to what took place in the 1984 committee. In fact in his ruling he made it absolutely evident that one should attach, as he put it, any "procedural flags" to what should only be regarded as an incident which had occurred within a committee.

Despite this, there was continual reference by the chair of the committee throughout the period of consideration of the bill to this as a precedent and, indeed, to the Speaker's ruling as a ruling which supported him as chair of the committee in determining that it was a precedent.

He also pointed out, and I say this simply for purposes of your information, Mr. Speaker, that he had been told of the Lachance incident by the clerk of the committee and that it was on that basis that he moved forward. Despite the fact that the Speaker quite clearly indicated to the House that the affair in 1984 should be considered simply an incident, it was clearly taken as a precedent by the chair of the committee and consequently imposed throughout the remainder of the considerations.

• (1250)

The second point which I want to make is that as a consequence of this order—and here we come to some of the rights of members of the House being undercut by what took place—a motion was moved by one of the Conservative members of the committee, Mr. Couture, to amend Bill C-62. That amendment was not permitted to be put before the committee, despite the fact that there was considerable interest in it on the part of a number of members of the committee representing all three parties.

Thus the consequence of the ruling has been to prevent a specific amendment from going forward to the floor of that committee despite the interest of all three parties in the amendment itself.

The third point I want to make to the Speaker is that as a consequence of the way in which the order was set out by the chair of this committee, it was not possible for the clerks of the committee and the clerks' branch to put in front of us as members of the committee prior to the start of clause by clause consideration of the bill the set of amendments which had been presented by all members of the committee to the committee clerk.

I raised this question in committee and the clerk was not able to give me a satisfactory explanation. Despite my request and that of other members that the amendments should be in front of us on Monday at the start of clause by clause consideration, the clerk was not able to give me any explanation as to why these amendments were not in front of us except on the day of the actual consideration of the group of clauses to which the amendments themselves referred.

Mr. Speaker, you can recognize that with the incredible complexity of the goods and services tax bill to have simply received at the last minute these amendments and to have to peruse them virtually as they were moved was not a satisfactory and acceptable way for members of this House to seriously perform their duties as members of Parliament and as members of the committee.

I could expand on that point, Mr. Speaker, but in view of the time I will not.

The fourth point that I want to bring to your attention, Mr. Speaker, is this. It has become clear in further detailed perusal of the 1984 decision of Mr. Lachance, which the member for Mississauga South claimed as a precedent for his actions as the chair of that committee,