

side of the House that we are under closure, and if we go back to clause 30 now, the chances are we will be on it all day and never get to anything else. I do not think that is a responsible way to operate.

The Chairman: Order, please. This is not necessarily a question of being prisoner to my decision but a question of being prisoner to our rules and precedents. I refer the hon. member to citation 401 at page 283 of Beauchesne's fourth edition, which reads as follows:

● (1532)

The consideration of a clause may, on motion made, be postponed, but the motion may not be made if the clause has been amended. A postponed clause is, in the absence of an order to the contrary, considered after the other clauses of the bill have been disposed of and before new clauses, if any, are brought up.

So this citation answers both points. If I were to accept the suggestion of the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre and if my ruling were to accept the amendment, clause 30 could not be postponed, if I interpret the situation correctly. I am at the disposal of the committee. If I were in the chair and acting as Mr. Speaker, the situation would be different; I could delay orders of the day. But we are now in committee of the whole and we have before us consideration of clause 32, so my only alternative is to obtain unanimous consent of the committee to allow me to give a ruling on clause 30.

Right now we are on clause 32. My suggestion to the committee is for representatives of the parties to get together and try to seek agreement as to the time at which I could give my ruling, but at the same time hon. members will have to take into consideration whatever effect this ruling might have after it is made.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pinard: Mr. Chairman, I want to say that there are 59 clauses in this bill, that we have studied only 31 of them, of which three are standing, so that only 28 clauses have been approved up to now. So I think the wisest way to proceed is the one suggested by Beauchesne himself, to study the following clauses, and if the opposition is really interested in going back to clause 30 which they have been discussing here for months, we will do it when the time comes, and the opposition will just have to go faster in passing the remaining clauses. We are now at clause 32 and we do want to study clauses 32, 33, 34 and so on.

The Chairman: Obviously, even if this has nothing to do with the Chair, I must say that there is a constraint of limitation of the debate in committee. I hope hon. members will also keep that in mind.

[*English*]

Mr. Stevens: Mr. Chairman, I was going to remind members of the committee of just what you have stated, that we are under a time allocation. I think there is a certain concern that we might not have sufficient time to consider other clauses, such as the ones dealing with registered retirement savings. I

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would suggest that we take up your suggestion of trying to have the parties work out some solution to this.

I can speak for my party when I say that we are not looking for further prolonged debate on clause 30. We feel basically that the amendment to it should be considered, and so should the clause itself, but probably from our standpoint not much more time than half an hour would be needed to dispose of both the amendment and clause 30, and we could then go on to clauses 31, 32, and so on. I say this because surely the committee will agree that the most controversial clause in this entire bill is clause 30, and if, because of closure, we are not even able to dispose of clause 30 in committee of the whole, it will be a most strange situation. I suggest that we not forget that when we were on clause 1 the Minister of Finance refused to answer questions on clause 30 beyond a certain point. Here we are in the ridiculous and ludicrous situation in which, on Friday, having finally reached clause 30 to which an amendment was proposed, on which a ruling is to be made as to whether or not it is admissible, the committee might well have to dispose of the bill because of closure without having at all considered clause 30.

Mr. Chrétien: Mr. Chairman, I think the hon. member has said something that needs to be corrected. When we were on clause 1, I entertained and replied to many questions on clause 30. You might remember, Mr. Chairman, you rendered a decision that I should answer, if I wanted to, questions on any of the clauses even though we were on clause 1, and I answered many questions on clause 30. Some which were too specific and not confined to the ruling of the Chair I did not answer, but I took a lot of time replying to questions on clause 30, and we spent practically all day Friday considering clause 30.

If we had not come across an amendment on which the Chair was to give a ruling, we would still be on clause 30 today. Members of the opposition can only blame themselves for the situation in which they find themselves today. Today we should go on to consideration of clauses 32, 33, and 34, and the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre stated that he had some questions on clause 34, and so does the hon. member for Welland.

I am surprised that hon. members are at last willing to collaborate with us and come to some agreement, after 22 days of trying to come to an agreement on this. We have had to impose time allocation because opposition members have not agreed to anything, but now because they find themselves in a difficult procedural situation, they want us to bail them out. If they want to, we are willing to deal with them.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Stevens: You bail us out?

Mr. Towers: Mr. Chairman, I rise on a point of order. First, let me say that if the hon. member for Welland wanted to make sure that he had an opportunity to speak on clause 34, the easiest thing he could have done was to ask his leader to revoke closure and thus allow ample time for discussion of the