

Government Orders

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): I will look at the matter, and I am sure the Speaker will rule on it later this day.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

• (1200)

[*English*]

EXCISE TAX ACT

MEASURE TO AMEND

The House resumed from Monday, January 29, 1990, consideration of the motion of Mr. Wilson (Etobicoke Centre) that Bill C-62, an Act to amend the Excise Tax Act, the Criminal Code, the Customs Act, the Customs Tariff, the Excise Act, the Income Tax Act, the Statistics Act and the Tax Court of Canada Act, be now read a second time and referred to the Standing Committee on Finance; and the amendment of Mr. Turner (Vancouver Quadra) (p. 7569)

Mr. Lewis: Mr. Speaker, there have been discussions among the parties and I want to take a minute to indicate that the procedure yesterday wherein there was an opportunity to question the Minister of Finance for an hour at the end of the interventions of the Minister of Finance, the Leader of the Official Opposition and the Leader of the New Democratic Party found some favour in that it gave members, who might not normally get a chance to participate in Question Period but were interested in the debate of the day, an opportunity to question the Minister of Finance.

I would point out to the House that we have looked at this and the Minister is prepared, should the House so wish, to do the same thing today for half an hour. This would give all members who participated in the debate and others an opportunity to question the minister. Our proposal has been made to the Official Opposition and to the New Democratic Party. It would be based on the same understanding as yesterday, that is, that there would be no dilatory motions during the day and also that there would be no effort on either side to extend the hours.

We have put this proposition to the opposition parties with the interest of furthering debate. It does impact on

the minister's time but he wants to make himself available for this type of questioning. If my hon. friends have had an opportunity to review our proposition and it finds favour with them, we are prepared to put the motion immediately.

Mr. Gauthier: Mr. Speaker, indeed the proposal was put to us and we on this side, at least, the Official Opposition, the Liberals, would take this proposal very seriously. There are some questions and clarifications which we would like to pursue before we give our consent to the motion. Such questions could be resolved this afternoon when the House Leaders of all parties meet for our regular Tuesday afternoon House Leaders meeting.

I would just like to give notice that we, for example, would like to question whether that half hour should be within the eight-hour debate allocated at second reading. We could possibly come to a conclusion on that one. We would prefer that it would not be within the eight hours of debate but, rather, excluded from that.

We would like to know who will answer questions. I just heard the minister say it would be the Minister of Finance. Well, the Minister of Finance would be here, I take it, in the last half hour of the day, or the Minister or State for Finance as his replacement. That satisfied that concern.

We would like to be assured that this proposal in the motion not yet put, but if adopted, would follow a certain procedure of advising the opposition that indeed the government would call Bill C-62 on a specific day. We would like to be sure, even though the notice paper says "subject to change" that that bill and not something else would be called on that day.

We have other small concerns which we would like to raise at that meeting. If the government is willing to consider further discussions and clarifications, that is fine with us.

Mr. Riis: Mr. Speaker, I have to hand it to the government House Leader. This was a very interesting and creative proposal. I think it grew out of a reflection that was shared by all members of the House yesterday that the exchange which occurred late in the day with the Minister of Finance was a useful discussion. I think that we saw the Minister of Finance unable to respond to the questions on a number of points, which I think is useful to identify those areas where the government has no idea what the implications of the GST will be and so on. I