

Allotment of Time for Bill C-11

That, on the third of the said days, at fifteen minutes before the expiry of the time provided for government business in such sitting, any proceeding before the Committee shall be interrupted, if required, for the purpose of this order and, in turn, every question then necessary in order to dispose of the Committee of the Whole stage to the said bill, shall be put forthwith and successively, without further debate or amendment.

Mr. Gordon Ritchie (Dauphin): Mr. Speaker, as I was saying, the federal budget has changed in recent years because it is a means by which the government carries out economic, fiscal, and social policies. These tax changes have not developed from the earlier time when secrecy was all that important. Today the Minister of Finance (Mr. Chrétien) has only a relatively small group of people who can advise him on tax changes before he makes proposals to the House of Commons. Thus, these substantial tax changes are often not very good, because the people who advise him cannot be expected to be aware of all the pitfalls.

At the present time, anyone can make submissions to the government and to the Minister of Finance on the pre-budget preparation in regard to things which should be in the budget; but there is no method available to the Department of Finance to decide and sift these in order to have public debate on their advisability or non-advisability. Everyone who makes submissions has their own personal interests to look after. What may benefit a small group of people may not benefit the country as a whole. This is where the House of Commons comes in to debate government proposals in the way of tax changes.

Imperfect as it may be, committee of the whole is the only means by which we can debate, pro and con, the tax changes. I am unhappy to see the government introducing closure once again. Debate on closure on second reading was finished before the actual time allocated. Similarly, there have been only five hours of debate in committee of the whole. Much of that was spent on the insulation problem. We have not touched roll-overs as yet, which is very important. It is a recognition that the capital gains tax, which was instituted at the time of the white paper, is not working the way it should. This Chamber is the only forum where we can debate these important things.

There is no way in which amendments can be instituted in this House except by the government. No witnesses can be heard on the merits of a bill or a tax change. After all, this is the place where we must act as witnesses; we must make suggestions and carry out the public interest. Even at the other place after third reading, when the bill is sent there, no substantive amendments can be made. That is the case on third reading in this House, or while the other place is dealing with the tax changes.

The government has erred in closing debate on these very important clauses, particularly those which will be dealt with next, such as the roll-over tax, which is the capital gains tax, and basically on which the whole of the tax changes proposed in the white paper and subsequently brought into the legislation—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Turner): Order, please. I regret to interrupt the hon. member but his allotted time has expired.

[Mr. Deputy Speaker.]

Mr. Benno Friesen (Surrey-White Rock): Mr. Speaker, I want to join the chorus of people who are lamenting the fact that the government has been almost spontaneously invoking closure on this very important piece of legislation regarding taxation. During second reading debate, when I spoke on this bill, I made the point that the government seems to have adopted the philosophy that it ought to spend as much as possible and, in order to pay for that, tax as much as possible. It has almost come to the point that when the government sees a missed opportunity for taxing, it is looked upon as a loophole. Then that loophole has to be covered, which is too bad.

The fact that closure has been invoked means that members of the opposition, whose duty it is to examine the expenditures of the government, are foreclosed from that full opportunity which we deserve. During the closure speeches on second reading, the hon. member for Skeena, the hon. Minister of State for Fitness and Amateur Sport (Mrs. Campagnolo), rose to speak in favour of the closure motion. As reported at page 1131 of *Hansard* dated November 22, 1977, she said the following:

This parliament is based on Westminster, the Mother of Parliaments, yet we have not modernized to any degree whatsoever our monstrously inept rules to deal with the lightning-quick world in which we live.

I am sure hon. members will realize that I do not agree very often with the hon. member for Skeena. Usually we do not see eye to eye on too many subjects; but I must agree with her that the government lives in a kind of medieval world when it comes to the business of the House. Intuitively I agreed with what she was saying, but I thought there had to be documentation for it. I went to the "Oxford Companion to English Literature" and, sure enough, that is where I found the documentation to prove that parliament is still operating under the rules of the Middle Ages. I turned to the section under S where I found the definition for Star Chamber. This book tells me that:

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The Court of Star Chamber, whose procedure in the reigns of James I and Charles I made it a proverbial type of an arbitrary and oppressive tribunal, was developed from the above judicial sittings in the 15th cent. It was abolished in 1641. In its original (Tudor) capacity, it was essentially the 'poor man's court', to do justice against great lords.

I think it is almost prophetic when it says that under the original rule of the Court of Star Chamber the poor people were protected from the oppression of the lords, but under the reigns of King James I and King Charles I—and, should I say, of King Pierre I—the poor people have lost that protection because the Star Chamber court is operating somewhere in the inner recesses of the government. I thought that was a good piece of documentation to prove the point that the Minister of State for Fitness and Amateur Sport had some basis in fact for complaining that parliament was still operating under the rules of the nineteenth century, and probably according to some mediaeval principles.

Then I remembered that before the Star Chamber court was dissolved history records that there was what was called the Long Parliament. Charles I, that imperious monarch who