

Excise Tax Act

has now been made on a very real point by the hon. member for Edmonton West.

If I may say so with respect, I suggest there is now a valid point of order before the House which must be ruled upon. The situation we now have is that the bill is defective, and the question is: how can we debate a defective bill? This is not to say that we are not without remedy in this situation. It is not to say that the time of the House this evening should be wasted. I believe the government House leader has sufficient ingenuity—at least I suspect he has—to bring forward another bill on the order paper with which we might deal. Perhaps there is another budget bill that we might deal with in order not to waste the time of the House, particularly the time of the government.

As I say, I think the hon. member for Edmonton West has made a very valid point, but a point that ought only to be an inconvenience to the government, nothing else. We are not suggesting that the House rise, or anything of that nature. The President of the Privy Council (Mr. Sharp) has indicated that he has a shopping list of a kind that he wants to get through. I suggest that, pending discussions which are going to take place between the government House leader and other House leaders, we move on to another bill. I think that is the proper way to handle this situation. Surely we should not allow a travesty of the rules to occur for the sake of convenience, especially if the convenience can be served by bringing forward another piece of legislation.

Mr. Sharp: Madam Speaker, the House will recall that when the Speaker reserved his ruling on this point he did suggest that the debate might continue. As I understood his argument today, it was to the effect that on most of the points that had been raised he did not think there was any disagreement between the ways and means motion and the bill; it was just on one point. On that one point he suggested there should be some discussion among the House leaders regarding how to rectify the position. As I understood his argument, it was a very nice point whether in fact the bill was or was not based on the ways and means resolution, but in the interest of preserving the principle of the ways and means motion he came down in favour of those who had raised the doubt.

However, as I understood him, his argument was to the effect that he thought the matter could easily be rectified. My recollection of his suggestion to the House is that we should continue the debate until the rectification had been made.

● (2010)

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Mr. Speaker, all of us are referring to what Mr. Speaker said when he made his ruling just before six o'clock. Of course, under the circumstances we are all relying on our memories. I am doing the same thing, but it seems to me that at the point when Mr. Speaker said the debate should go on, it was after he had suggested there might be a consideration of a proposition or some proposal made this day. There was even a reference to consultation between the government and the opposition House leaders as to what course might be followed. There was some friendly chit-chat at six o'clock, naturally, in that kind of situation, but there

was no serious consultation. No proposal has been made to us by the government as to which option the government is going to take.

If we carry on with the debate tonight, then I submit we do not know what we are debating. Are we debating the bill in its present form in the belief that the resolution is to be corrected, or are we going to have a new bill brought in? If that is the case, then this debate is on something that is not before us.

I am quite prepared to agree that there was a point at which Mr. Speaker said something about the debate carrying on, but my memory tells me he said that after he had made reference to there being consultation this day as to what we might do. It was at the very end of his ruling that he said if no agreement were reached tonight he would give a direction at three o'clock tomorrow. Not only has there been no agreement, there has been no attempt to arrive at an agreement. I do not know why the government has done this. It had to go out and give the matter consideration, and that is understandable, but in the circumstances I do not think we should continue to debate something that may not be properly before us. I suggest that the suggestion of the hon. member for Edmonton West (Mr. Lambert), that this debate be adjourned and we move to the consideration of some other order of business, is a good one.

Mr. MacGuigan: Madam Speaker, the point raised by hon. gentlemen opposite would be a very valid point for argument had the Speaker not already ruled on this particular issue. Not only was the Speaker quite clear in saying that the debate should continue, but there are two factors which make it even more clear that this is what was in his mind. First of all there is the fact that he suggested the debate should continue and that it would only be at three o'clock tomorrow that he would attempt to resolve any problems. Then at the very conclusion of his ruling he called on the hon. member for Norfolk-Haldimand (Mr. Knowles) to continue the debate. I do not think there could be any more clear an indication of what Mr. Speaker intended.

Mr. Baldwin: Madam Speaker, I can take a more objective approach to this as I was not here and did not hear what took place. I did not hear the ruling, but I have since acquainted myself with it. I was having half hourly reports delivered to me at the place I was carrying on business in order to keep me posted, so I can be much more objective.

I have spoken with my friend, the hon. member for Edmonton West (Mr. Lambert), and with the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles). In addition, I have listened to the government House leader who has suggested that we should continue. I think there are other reasons behind the obvious suggestion on his part that we should continue.

As I understand the situation Mr. Speaker's view was, and he in fact held, that there was a defect. He made the very useful suggestion, which is often made from the chair, and one which I think must often commend itself to members of the House, that we should get together in an attempt to work this out.