

Oral Questions

Mr. Gray (Windsor West): Why aren't you appealing it?

Mr. Wilson (Etobicoke Centre): My friend asks why not appeal it. The Minister of Justice has said that the only basis for appeal is one narrow part of the judgment, not the basic substance of the judgment, which says that the Prime Minister was perfectly in order in using the Constitution to appoint the eight senators.

Mr. Bill Blaikie (Winnipeg Transcona): Mr. Speaker, we are not talking about one narrow part. We are talking about the judge having said that we must do without delay what is almost impossible to do, and that is to add another seat to the House of Commons. That is not something that should be taken lightly by the Minister of Finance.

• (1430)

He talks about uncertainty. We read in the paper today that the Manitoba government may well refuse to collect the tax for the federal government in certain sectors of the Manitoba economy. More uncertainty.

Why should any businessperson, consumer, or provincial government, for that matter, plan to collect or pay this tax, when the government refuses to deal with the uncertainty itself by referring this matter to the Supreme Court?

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

Hon. Kim Campbell (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada): Mr. Speaker, I would repeat again that there is no uncertainty about the validity of what the government has done. I can quote from the judgment of the Court of Ontario: "Finally, if New Brunswick is entitled to an additional member in the Commons, that is a matter for Parliament. The court has no jurisdiction to declare the House of Commons improperly constituted".

This House of Commons is properly constituted. The Senate is properly constituted. They should get on with their business.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

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BILL C-78

Hon. Chas. L. Caccia (Davenport): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of the Environment who probably knows that this morning the National

Coalition of Environmental Groups held a press conference to urge the minister either to strengthen or to scrap his proposed environmental assessment legislation.

The minister would alleviate public concerns about his bill by amending it to give the Minister of the Environment, rather than the minister proposing a project, the power to reject projects which would cause significant environmental impact.

Will the minister assure the House today that he would bring forward appropriate amendments to the committee before it starts its clause-by-clause study of the bill?

Hon. Robert de Cotret (Minister of the Environment): Mr. Speaker, first, I would like to commend my hon. colleague for expressing his concern and, obviously, his interest in Bill C-78.

As we all know in the House, we do not have the kind of environmental assessment legislation that we need in this country. Bill C-78 is a very important step in that direction to establish the kind of legislation we need.

As I have said throughout this process, I am more than happy to hear the recommendations of colleagues on potential amendments to the bill. Certainly, I will undertake to bring appropriate amendments, should they be presented to me, before the committee before we get to clause-by-clause.

Hon. Chas. L. Caccia (Davenport): Mr. Speaker, I thank the minister for his reply, but he knows very well that it is better to have a bill with clout, than legislation that has no public support.

Therefore, again, will he undertake to support amendments in committee, whether they are proposed by us or by members of his party, that will give the Minister of the Environment the final say on the approval or disapproval of specific projects?

Hon. Robert de Cotret (Minister of the Environment): Mr. Speaker, as I have just said, I have indicated to all my colleagues opposite that I was more than happy to receive their suggestions for potential amendments to the bill and I have done the same thing with the provinces.

I have a short list of proposed amendments that we are studying very carefully. Yes, I will undertake to propose to the committee some amendments before we get to clause-by-clause, those amendments that we feel are in the same spirit as that of the bill and that will effectively