

Excise Tax Act

Mr. Bell (Carleton): That is a reflection on the Speaker.

Mr. Benidickson: That has been respected by this side of the house. But now we come to the second stage of debate, and on grounds of principle it has always been the historic practice of the house, as I have indicated, to have a fairly wide discussion on second reading of items not covered by the bill. I think that this side of the house has been very respectful of the rule concerning relevancy in so far as resolutions are concerned. However, I say that a new type of closure is being introduced at the suggestion of the Minister of Finance (Mr. Fleming).

Mr. Bell (Carleton): That is a reflection on the Speaker.

Mr. Martin (Essex East): No, it is not.

Mr. Benidickson: We will see whether or not it carries. I suggest, Mr. Speaker, that all through the years this has been the practice, and I believe I could quote some remarks of yours with respect to the second reading of a taxation bill. I want to say that in my view there is no reference to a rule on the part of the previous administration, either by the Speaker or by objection from a member of the ministry, that would cut off a debate such as is being undertaken here with respect to things that should be in this bill and are not in it.

Mr. Martin (Essex East): A moment ago when you raised the question of precedent, Mr. Speaker, I frankly confessed I could not meet Your Honour's argument, and for the reason I stated at the time. However, I did say that I found it difficult to believe that Mr. Speaker Macdonald was drawing the conclusion which Your Honour was attaching to his decision. I have, however, come across a very interesting precedent. The hon. member for Fort William (Mr. Badanai) was referring to the debate which had taken place in this house in June, 1955 on an amendment to the Excise Tax Act but not particularly referring as he said, to automobiles. I find at page 4373 of *Hansard* for June 2, 1955 that no less a person than the present Minister of Finance, speaking for the opposition and addressing himself to a particular amendment, did not confine himself to that point, except to point out that the amendment was long overdue, just as one might now say that the abolition of the excise tax on automobiles was long overdue in view of the assurance given by my hon. friend and the government.

What my hon. friend did was to go on and talk about matters that were not included in the proposed amendments to the Excise Tax Act. Here is what he said, for instance:

[Mr. Benidickson.]

When the government is announcing a reduction in the excise tax it is easy enough to content ourselves with welcoming it, but I ask the house to observe the commodities upon which it is proposed that the tax be reduced. All of these are commodities upon which a reduction in the taxes is justified and indeed overdue. But let us remind ourselves at the same time, Mr. Chairman, that there is a long list of commodities more closely and intimately related to the necessities of life than any of those on the list before us now, upon which no reduction of indirect taxes is proposed by the government. Do hon. members of this house keep adequately in their minds and on their consciences the fact that this government goes on levying under the Excise Tax Act taxes upon the very necessities of life, upon our clothing, our boots and shoes and household furniture, certain prepared foods, and indeed on many drugs and medicines that are essential to those who require them?

He goes on to discuss items that are not included in the amendments.

Mr. Speaker: May I ask the hon. member, was that during the debate on the resolution?

Mr. Bell (Carleton): It was on the resolution.

Mr. Speaker: May I say this, in an effort to dispose of this matter and get on with the debate. I did not stop the hon. member for Fort William. He is free to proceed. However, I have already indicated that I do not feel the limitation on discussion extends to the point of restricting the criticism of the bill because it does not go farther than it does or because it does not deal with other items. What I have said is that I would consider it improper to debate any particular section of the act which is not touched, on the basis that one would if moving an amendment to that section, which would be out of order. I think we can proceed on the basis of a general observation, such as the hon. member for Essex East (Mr. Martin) has just read, with respect to the scope of the bill; that would be in order on second reading.

Mr. Badanai: Then I assume that I may continue, Mr. Speaker, and touch upon some of the aspects of this act which have been overlooked by the minister. I am particularly interested in this measure because it could have been the means by which a considerable amount of employment could have been provided. I refer, of course, to an amendment to the Excise Tax Act which, of course, would affect the automobile industry. There are other businesses in addition to the automobile business, but I am particularly interested in the automobile business because it is one of the largest industries we have in Canada, employing a great number of people, and it is an industry from which the government derives a tremendous amount of money through taxes.