

Excise Tax Act

strict interpretation of procedure it might be possible for me to say that the mover and supporters of the motion would be stopped from arresting or attempting to arrest the progress of the bill. I believe that would be an extremely stringent view.

● (1750)

I note also the suggestion of the hon. member for Peace River (Mr. Baldwin), a most experienced advocate of procedure in the House, that the progress of this or other legislation is never greatly retarded by this type of procedural difficulty. Whether or not the hon. member for Peace River is totally accurate in that assessment, I certainly accept the spirit of it. More than two days have been spent in debate on this measure, after six days debate on the resolution; almost three hours have been spent on procedural arguments, some of which followed requests which were put forward and granted for adjournment of the procedural argument. I have reserved judgment, and there is now the amendment on the floor. Finally, we are far from the point in our year, from the situation in earlier mid-session, in which the House could easily adjust itself to severe procedural dislocation.

Thus, in the interests of preserving the important procedural safeguards surrounding the relationship between the ways and means resolution and this bill or, generally speaking, a bill based on that resolution, it is my view that this bill and the resolution must be brought into closer conformity with one another. However, it is also my view that this ought to be accomplished without prejudice to the progress of the bill. I therefore leave it to the minister and to his colleagues in the House, during the remainder of this day, and with the necessary consent, to prepare amendments or alterations to either the bill or the resolution so as to accomplish the necessary objective. If the parties find themselves unable to agree and, in turn, the House finds itself unable to agree or to accept whatever the alterations or amendments may be, then I would propose to take the necessary action from the Chair tomorrow at 3 p.m.

In the meantime it is my view that debate on the measure ought to continue. The hon. member for Norfolk-Haldimand (Mr. Knowles).

Mr. Knowles (Norfolk-Haldimand): Mr. Speaker, since my immortal remarks are going to be split into three parts if I go on now until six o'clock, may I call it six o'clock?

Mr. Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

At 5.56 p.m. the House took recess.

AFTER RECESS

The House resumed at 8 p.m.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Morin): The hon. member for Norfolk-Haldimand (Mr. Knowles).

[Mr. Speaker.]

Mr. Lambert (Edmonton West): Madam Speaker, may I raise a point of order. At five minutes to six this evening when Mr. Speaker had finished his ruling regarding the point of order I had raised last week, and which I continued this afternoon, the hon. member for Norfolk-Haldimand (Mr. Knowles) adjourned the debate. However, I am puzzled, and I think that some of my colleagues are also puzzled, by some of the directions of Mr. Speaker at the end of his ruling, and it is on that point that I should like to ask for some clarification.

Having ruled that the bill was, in effect, an imperfect bill, Mr. Speaker directed that the minister had some options regarding either the ways and means motion or the bill, and that he should consult with the opposition as to what should be done. On failing to agree, Mr. Speaker would then have some observations to make, and possibly some directions to give at 3.00 p.m. tomorrow afternoon. He then directed that the debate continue, but here I find myself in a dilemma. Because the bill, being an imperfect bill, has to be corrected, the government must have time to determine its option regarding how to proceed so as to correct the defect, and it must at least be discussed with those on this side of the House so we can determine whether it does correct, in our estimation, the defect in the bill relative to the original motion.

I find it difficult to see how we can continue the debate. It must be remembered that the debate has continued to this point while Mr. Speaker reserved his judgment on my point of order. That debate is without prejudice to the amendment that my leader tabled at the conclusion of his speech, and any other happenings up to Mr. Speaker's ruling. But Mr. Speaker having found that the bill is defective, I repeat that I find it a little difficult to see how we can continue the debate tonight.

It is my suggestion that we move from this item to another item, and that we have a quick consultation with the government House leader regarding another item of business. Bill C-66 should stand deferred until we see what is going to happen tomorrow. The minister is not in the chamber. We cannot tell what option is being exercised. I suggest very strongly that this is what should happen and that we should move to another item of business.

Mr. Cullen: Madam Speaker, we had the direction from Mr. Speaker that the debate was to continue pending presentation of the options, and these are now being worked on. I think Your Honour was correct to recognize the hon. member for Norfolk-Haldimand (Mr. Knowles), and that the debate should continue until the options are presented.

Mr. Lambert (Edmonton West): On what bill?

Mr. Baker (Grenville-Carleton): Madam Speaker, may I speak to the same point of order. I listened very carefully to what the hon. member for Edmonton West (Mr. Lambert) said, and I think he is quite correct. At the point in time, when Mr. Speaker made his statement just prior to the six o'clock adjournment, I think he was dealing with a suggestion as to how we might concur. But at that time he had not had the benefit of the very succinct argument that