

Income Tax Act

Mr. Olson: Tell us about the six and eight hour days.

Mr. Danforth: We on this side, in order to fulfil our obligations, have tried to gain some understanding of the measure before us. Many of us have sought outside advice. We have talked to chartered accountants and have attended seminars held by lawyers whose business it is to deal with tax measures. Never in one single instance have these people taken the attitude that they understand fully the implications of this bill. We have been debating a measure some 707 pages in length. Is it not rather sad, Mr. Speaker, that owing to the action of this government which forced us to vote on the measure, over 400 pages of the bill were not even dealt with in the committee stage? I think the situation is preposterous and is not what the people of this country expect by way of government action.

In the opinion of most Canadians, tax reform should be designed to distribute the tax burden more equitably among all citizens in order not to create any specific hardship. In this way, everyone would pay his fair share, and perhaps the tax base might even be lowered rather than raised. Even a cursory reading of the bill indicates that it does not comply in any way with the common conception of tax reform. The bill is designed to extract more taxes, not less, from the people of Canada. The very nature of the bill, with all its rules and regulations, will complicate the tax system of this country even more. Even the tax consultants will throw up their hands at the thought of this new tax measure. The government has forced it through Parliament, and "forced" is the only word I can use. In addition to this, it has had to bring in some amendments of its own, an indication that the government itself finds the bill far from complete. This is why Parliament has fallen to such a disgusting low.

All segments of the economy have begged the government to slow down the processing of the bill through this House. The provinces have asked for it, the business community has asked for it, chartered accountants and lawyers have asked for it, international corporations have asked for it but this government is determined to put it through to meet the deadline of January 1, 1972 set by the Minister of Finance. Mr. Speaker, I cannot comprehend why this government would feel that the personal reputation of one member of the government who made a forecast should be placed above the welfare of thousands of Canadian citizens. That just does not make any sense.

• (4:50 p.m.)

Mr. Osler: What you say is nonsense.

Mr. Danforth: In his speech on third reading, the minister stated that there would be further amendments after this bill goes through. He carefully enunciated amendments which would be considered, but the banking committee of the other place has taken exception to those sections which are to be amended. Was this done in an attempt to help the people of Canada or was it a deliberate attempt to influence the further consideration of this bill? The government did not hesitate to impose closure in this House, so why would it hesitate to tinker with the other place? I feel this is exactly what is going on.

[Mr. Danforth.]

In stating that this bill would have to be proclaimed before the full effects of it can be known, the minister is making guinea pigs of the people of Canada as my leader pointed out. It is the trial and error method, but unfortunately the livelihood of many thousands of Canadians is involved. We cannot afford to tinker with the economic climate of Canada today. Too many businesses have been forced to close, too many farmers have left the land, too many big industries have decided not to expand and too many industries have left the country in disgust. Now, we have before us the bland assurance of this government that all will be well if the opposition will just desist and let them ram this measure through Parliament.

Mr. Osler: You don't know the difference between a ram and a turtle.

Mr. Danforth: The people of Canada do not understand this bill, Mr. Speaker, nor do all Members of Parliament but the people of Canada thoroughly understand the actions of this government. This has been proven by the tenor of debate in this House these last two or three days. It is an indication of the political climate of the country.

I have always loved the United States and its actions, Mr. Speaker. It is interesting to note that the members on my left, for whom I have the greatest respect, have now directed their attacks not at the government which they know, as a result of having their ear to the ground, will not be back, but at this party which they feel will be their chief antagonists when we go to the country.

Mr. Mahoney: My God! This must be the cartoon hour!

Mr. Danforth: It is interesting that some of the back benchers and parliamentary secretaries opposite have taken an active part in this debate. I think they realize that this will be their last Parliament and their last chance to be on the record.

Mr. McGrath: You will go down in history as the only one who had to bring in closure to get your bill through.

Mr. Danforth: In spite of the propaganda, in spite of the assurances of this government, in spite of their lack of intimate knowledge of parliamentary procedure, the people of this country still think for themselves. When you travel among the people of this country, Mr. Speaker, you learn that they are not fooled by the blandness of this government when it says that a million or so people will be taken off the tax rolls. They know that as long as this bill is in effect in its entirety they will be back on the rolls. They know that inflation will eat the few crumbs this government is giving as tax deductions. The little man in the grocery store, in the service station, the shoe clerk, and the fellow in the factory realize that the government have made changes in this bill and they realize why this was done. They know that they cannot win tax cuts for themselves as they speak only with one voice, but they know also that when the credit unions and co-operatives brought many voices together and indicated that they represented a large number of voters, the government listened and made changes. This is power politics, Mr. Speaker.