

Time Allocation for Bill C-11

Finance himself stated that he would be making a budgetary statement, that he was introducing a budgetary measure in the midst of the throne speech debate. The March budgetary proposals of the former minister of finance are totally irrelevant in the picture—do not talk to us about that—and there was debate on those. They came to absolutely nothing.

I find it rather amazing, for instance, on the subject of social security members, that we do not get an intelligent participation from a caucus which let this provision slip through due to the July closure on that bill. Even a parliamentary secretary to the Minister of Finance I believe did not even know that new section 65 in Bill C-22, extended the use of the social security numbers. He did not know it, but he voted yea. They are just a bunch of blessed sheep; that is all. They know the volume of correspondence they receive, each and everyone of them. In Ontario and western Canada they were deluged with correspondence. It was a false principle, going back on the solemn undertaking of the former Prime Minister, Mr. Lester Pearson, on the use of the social security numbers. That is the problem.

In the steering committee of the standing committee on Finance, Trade and Economic Affairs, my colleague, the hon. member for York-Simcoe (Mr. Stevens) asked the Minister of Finance to appear on a certain number of dates to debate the supplementary estimates. With respect to the most important ones in the supplementary estimates—yes, the minister would appear. Then the answer came down the line—no, he would not appear until Bill C-11 passed. What kind of blackmail is that to exercise on a committee? The minister, who has an obligation to appear, has absolutely no right to tell any committee of this House that he refuses to appear before it. It is his duty to appear to have his estimates passed and not to have them fall into line under a guillotine. As a matter of fact the rules are so stacked that if every minister of the House could refuse or could find some excuse not to appear before the appropriate standing committee before December 5 or 6, the guillotine would fall, and the rule says that unless the estimates have been reported back, they will have been deemed to have been reported back.

In theory and in practice for a lot of ministers, particularly in this administration, there is often a refusal, couched in nice terms, I will admit. We can never get ministers on Thursdays, which are one of the best days for committee hearings. Why? They are in cabinet. On two of the four best days available ministers will not appear and the committees are denied.

We have these hundreds of millions of dollars in supplementary estimates and the House is supposed to pass them like this. The hon. member for Stormont-Dundas (Mr. Lumley), parliamentary secretary to the Minister of Finance, says that these are government proposals and their passage ipso facto will be good for the country. That is the biggest act of total misrepresentation to the public of Canada in all the years of performance by this government.

Then we heard somebody say that there is some consumer protection legislation to come, that there is now Bill C-13.

[Mr. Lambert (Edmonton West).]

● (2042)

We know that Bill C-13 is the misbegotten grandson or great-grandson of other pieces of legislation. Some bastardry has been perpetrated in its presentation. The minister has inherited it from the former Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs (Mr. Abbott), and I wish he would say publicly what he thinks of Bill C-16 and Bill C-42. The government was glad to see the end of the last session because of those two pieces of legislation which have now reappeared as Bill C-13. Even backbenchers were apologetic about the legislation, but the hon. member for Algoma (Mr. Foster) extolled the virtues of it and said the House should pass it for the benefit of the Canadian public. Mr. Speaker, if the hon. member for Bonaventure-Îles-de-la-Madeleine (Mr. Béchard) and others who interject now had participated in the debate on this bill they would have said that strangely enough the government dared present such legislation. We on this side of course are used to this sort of tripe.

The opposition saved the Canadian public from a fate worse than death in the last session so far as Bill C-16 and Bill C-42 were concerned. The government is wrong when it says there is good legislation waiting to be passed. If its record is any indication we must look at all legislation more closely. I find it strange that the Minister of Finance, having presented a bill of some 216 pages which, I am sure, for the vast majority of government backbenchers—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ethier): Order, please. I regret to interrupt the hon. member but his time has expired.

Mr. Stanley Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Mr. Speaker, like the hon. member who has just taken his seat I noted the extravagant remarks made by the hon. member for Algoma (Mr. Foster). To hear him and some other Liberals speak about Bill C-11 you would think it was a ticket to the millennium and that all we need to do is pass the bill and we will have justice and peace for a thousand years.

Mr. Stanfield: We would still have the same old Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Whelan).

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): The purpose of a tax bill is supposed to be at least three-fold. First, it is naturally a means of raising money. Second, it should be a means of providing jobs. Perhaps even more important is the fact that a tax bill ought to straighten out the unfairnesses, the inequities, and injustices that exist in our society.

I suggest that the only one of these conditions that Bill C-11 meets is that it will raise money. As for providing jobs, it does not do that at all. As for straightening out unfairnesses, as we have pointed out many times this bill makes things worse because it provides handouts to the wealthy and to large corporations of \$1.2 billion per year.

When we ask for improvements in pensions for senior citizens or veterans, or for legislation to take care of the handicapped, the blind and others, we are asked where the money is to come from. Yet when the government wants to give hand-