

● (1612)

In my communication I think he asked for four items and those four items, according to the calculations made by my officials, amount to about \$40 million. We say we shall pay that to them. We said that at the time, and he wants us, now, to pay it. But all that is subject, as usual, to verification by my officials of the accuracy of the cost of those items for the six months, because exactly what we are doing is verifying the tax with the other provinces which have cut sales taxes across the board according to our plan. For clarification, it is two thirds of a three point cut on four items for six months, and we are willing to pay about \$40 million.

Mr. Stevens: I am sure the minister will agree that on clause 1 it is traditional that the specific wording of the clause is not the substance of what is really before the committee. The clause is a conventional starting point for a more rambling question or, for that matter, speeches with respect to the bill.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pinard: Mr. Chairman, what the hon. member suggests is true generally speaking. Clause 1 of a bill usually gives the title of the bill. What we have here in clause 1 is a very specific measure dealing with employment at a special work site or a remote location covering two pages and not the title of the bill. So the hon. member is not being consequent when he says that he can argue in a general way on the bill as a whole because clause 1 is of a general nature when in this case it is of a strictly limited and specific nature. So for that reason he cannot do what can usually be done with other bills.

Mr. Chairman, if the hon. member wants to stick to what is in clause 1 I think that then we will be in order and we will be able to make progress in a logical and normal way.

The Chairman: Order. I must point out to the hon. parliamentary secretary that he should listen not only to what the hon. member for York-Simcoe (Mr. Stevens) has to say but also what the Chair has to say. The Chair has already said—and that is my ruling—that as a general practice and in this committee of the whole whatever the subject of clause 1 may be, whether it be the title or a particular subject matter, the practice has been to give more latitude to the debate while at the same time trying to prevent hon. members from dealing with specific clauses but allowing them also to discuss the bill in a general way. It is precisely under clause 1 that hon. members take the floor to express their opinion in a general manner on two or three clauses of the bill without addressing specific questions to the minister or to those who can answer questions. So my decision stands. I shall continue to follow the practice which has always prevailed in committee of the whole and if I can lay my hands on some precedents which confirm what I have just said, I intend to leave hon. members a certain leeway as it has always been done regarding the first clause of a bill and not restrict them, as the hon. member seems to want, to dealing with the issue of “employment at special work site

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or remote location”. Of course that does not prevent them from speaking about that clause in particular but then they can also express a general opinion on the bill.

[*English*]

Mr. Stevens: Mr. Chairman, I think it is most regrettable, closure having been used last night to force a vote on the second reading of this bill, that we in the opposition should be met with 15 minutes of running interference or filibuster, whatever you like to call it—

Some hon. Members: Oh!

Mr. Stevens: —on the part of government supporters when we are simply putting a few questions to the minister to clarify the position of the government with regard to this bill. Our difficulties today have been doubled because, as a result of the failure yesterday to table copies of the ways and means motion, we cannot reach clause 30 today in any event.

An hon. Member: What about unanimous consent?

Mr. Stevens: It is the fault of the government that we cannot reach clause 30. So if we are not able to speak in general terms on clause 1 we are prevented, really, from asking any questions with regard to the most relevant portion of the bill, namely, the provincial sales tax arrangement, until next week. In order to clarify the current position of the government may I ask whether it is the intention of the government to continue with the plan to pay \$85 or some such amount to the taxpayers of Quebec as outlined by the minister the other night?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Chrétien: Mr. Chairman, it does not matter in any case because when we reach clause 30, I will determine exactly the clauses or provisions of this bill. As I have said on several occasions, we do intend to clarify once again the policy of the government. Since the government of Quebec is entitled to these \$40 million we will let them have it. As for the rest, they have left on the table some \$186 million and we have decided not to penalize the people of Quebec, which means that we can immediately reduce by \$85 the income tax of Quebecers. Mr. Parizeau came up yesterday with a change to that decision by saying that if I decide to wait until next spring, and in this respect he still leaves me the choice, it could cause him some difficulties. He is leaving that to me. I have not yet studied whether his second proposal contained something worthwhile. I have just received the letter where he acknowledges, Mr. Chairman, that my proposed \$85 rebate to those who have paid income tax in 1977 is quite acceptable to him. This means that the bill such as it stands now is quite agreeable to the government of Quebec. For some two months the opposition has been telling me to accept what is agreeable to the government of Quebec so I do not see why they are asking me questions about it. Of course I will pay back to the Quebec taxpayers what is owed to them. If Mr. Parizeau made a mistake in his budget by including figures which he had no