

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

PROTECTION OF PRIVACY BILL

CREATION OF OFFENCES RELATED TO INTERCEPTION OF PRIVATE COMMUNICATIONS BY CERTAIN DEVICES

The House resumed consideration of the motion of Mr. Lang that Bill C-176, to amend the Criminal Code, the Crown Liability Act and the Official Secrets Act, be read the third time and do pass.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Perhaps before I recognize the hon. Minister of Justice (Mr. Lang) who, having moved the motion in respect of this bill, may be closing the debate and depriving other hon. members of the opportunity to speak on third reading, I could have some comment from hon. members on this point.

Mr. Lambert (Edmonton West): He does not close the debate.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Perhaps I could ask for the unanimous consent of the House in order that the minister might be permitted to speak.

Mr. Lambert (Edmonton West): Why should the House have to give unanimous consent?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: If there is not unanimous consent, I will not recognize the minister.

Mr. Howard: Mr. Speaker, I am not rising to deny unanimous consent, but I should like to point out that other hon. members of the House should be allowed to speak following the remarks of the Minister of Justice.

An hon. Member: The minister cannot close the debate on third reading.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: If there is any objection, I should like to hear hon. members on the point of order. For the moment, I am asking hon. members whether there is unanimous consent to the minister speaking.

Mr. Bell: Mr. Speaker, we certainly will give unanimous consent to allow the minister to speak, but we want to clarify our anxiety in respect of the suggestion that if he speaks he will close the debate. We have more speakers on this matter. I can understand why the minister wants to speak, but I do not understand why he did not speak when the motion for third reading was made. That would have been the appropriate time for the minister to make his remarks.

Mr. Lambert (Edmonton West): Mr. Speaker, I rise on the same point of order. But I do not do so to deny consent to the minister making his remarks. I rise as a result of the suggestion that if the minister speaks at this time on third reading he would close the debate. In all my experience I have never heard of this proposition, or a similar request for consent for the minister to speak on his own bill on third reading.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Mr. Speaker, I hesitate to disagree with my friend, the hon. member for

Protection of Privacy

Edmonton West (Mr. Lambert)), but there is a rule that states a member cannot speak twice.

Mr. Lambert (Edmonton West): Surely, that is not applicable here.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Just a moment now. My hon. friend is not Mr. Speaker any longer. There is another rule which says that when an hon. member moves a bill even without speaking, or even if he only tips his hat, he is regarded as having spoken; that is his last chance. What we are being asked to do now is give the Minister of Justice the floor a second time. Speaking for members of my party, we give that consent.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: That is the position the Chair adopted in this instance, and that is why I asked whether the House gave its unanimous consent. When the minister moved the motion for third reading he had his opportunity to speak. However, I gather there is unanimous consent, and that it is understood others will have an opportunity to speak on third reading.

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

Hon. Otto E. Lang (Minister of Justice): Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the consent of hon. members and it may be understood by hon. members that at the point when it seemed a vote on third reading was imminent I rose to indicate to the House that I did not want to interrupt or prevent the passage of the bill, but I was watching if other hon. members were rising to speak on the bill. It was at that time that I deferred my remarks when the Chair recognized the hon. member for St. Paul's (Mr. Atkey). I recognize the privilege I have been given by hon. members of the House in allowing me to speak at this time. I hope this bill does receive third reading very shortly.

I noticed the remarks of a number of hon. members today and on previous occasions, that this debate has proven that parliament works. I would have to say as well, because of the time spent debating this bill, that it proves that parliament works exceedingly slowly. This subject matter has been before this House of Commons for approximately four years.

Mr. Fairweather: And some of it has been pretty abortive.

Mr. Lang: Under those circumstances, it does seem to me that it takes a great deal of time to arrive at the position where we are enacting into law something a lot of members want to see in the law. I am referring to all the provisions of this bill, but particularly to the important provisions which provide an offence for the first time in the criminal law in respect of the general intrusion into the privacy of other persons, and specifically the intrusion by electronic devices.

The other important provision in this bill, and perhaps it is the more important provision, is the provision making it an offence to possess or to sell devices intended for the intrusion into the privacy of individual citizens. I suggest that with the adoption of this provision we will provide a diminution in the number of these devices for sale on the market. If we do not provide this penalty for this offence