

Income Tax Act

Mr. Peddle:—sending symphony orchestras to Newfoundland outposts to try to bring some culture to them. What kind of nonsense is this?

An hon. Member: They don't want culture.

Mr. Peddle: Obviously hon. members opposite do not know the meaning of culture. To some of those sitting over there, culture has to be crammed down our throats, it is something you pretend to understand when you don't. Where I come from we don't do that.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Peddle: Culture is something that we do or we don't have, and if we don't have it we don't go around pretending we do. Then, there was the Royal Commission on the Status of Women whose report has since been put in the dustbin. And think of all the waste and extravagance which must have resulted from the existence of the Department of Consumer and Corporate Affairs under a minister who concerns himself about the correct weight of a popsicle being on the label, making sure that a square inch of a sweater has the right number of yarns in it, and so on.

Mr. Mahoney: What bill are you on, now?

Mr. Peddle: I am talking about government extravagance which seems to be an absolutely necessary part of any tax reform package. One communication went out from the minister's department telling consumers: If you have trouble with electrical appliances, make sure the plug is in. This is the kind of nonsense the country is paying millions of dollars to support. The administration has not touched the real problems of consumer relations, nor does it wish to do so. It is afraid because if it touches the real problems, some of the contributions to the party might dry up. So, they just natter away and try to convince the Canadian people they are here in their interests. This is great stuff.

Then, there is the commission to study the matter of a guaranteed annual income. If it goes the way of all other commissions, the commissioners probably will guarantee themselves an income for a limited time and that will be the end of it. I have no objection, but I think I would have to agree that the proposals made by this government during its three years, especially in the dying moments of its administration, are aimed at the majority of the taxpayers. I believe something is wrong when a government becomes preoccupied, from the day it comes into office, with winning the next election. I think that is wrong and I cannot buy it. I am not saying a government should not be political. I am saying, however, there should be some kind of a decent ratio between priorities and politics. At least some consideration should be given to the priorities of the country. If there should be a measure which would be good for 60 people this government would embrace it. The members of the government would all cheer and say "hear, hear, we have a good thing".

They could not care less if it should adversely and terribly affect another 40 people in this country representing a minority.

• (3:50 p.m.)

The attitude of the members of the government is "to hell with it" so long as they have a majority throughout.

This seems to be their object in life. I say there is something a little wrong with this attitude. I am not so naïve as to suggest that a government should not be political. I have more sense than that. When everything else is put aside, and when from the day they are put in office they simply try to win the next election and the devil take the consequences, I say this is wrong. This is bad. This tax reform so-called appears in two official languages. The ordinary Canadian could not read the previous taxation bill but at least the experts could manage to pick it apart. But in this case we have been informed in no uncertain terms that even the experts and lawyers cannot make any sense of it. As I say, it is in two official languages, but I know from my own point of view that it just might as well be in Chinese or Arabic rather than in English because there is no way one can cope with it. No one understands it, not even the experts.

Mr. Mahoney: What part don't you understand?

Mr. Peddle: The hon. member asks what I understand about it. I understand only a few tidbits picked out by his colleagues. There is to be an exemption for the lower income group and a little relaxation in respect of the older taxpayers. However, it should not take 707 pages to do this and such a bill should not be introduced on the eve of an election. It should have been introduced immediately by this government back in 1968. But, no; it is introduced now when there is a federal election on the horizon. I suggest that this time the people of Canada will recognize this for what it is. We have had a bill before us involving \$80 millions in aid to industries which might be affected by the U.S. surcharge. We on this side of the House had to try hard to find an opportunity to make a comment on that bill because all hon. gentlemen across the way wanted to get credit for it. Finally, before an election, they wanted to project themselves a little. They had been quiet all along, but now they wanted to get in on some little thing about which there is not too much controversy. But they are avoiding this tax reform like the plague. It is difficult to get one of them to talk about it. All they do is suggest it be sent to the committee. They do not wish to talk about it because it is embarrassing.

In rising to speak, I followed a member of the New Democratic Party. Actually there should have been one or two Liberal members rise at that time, but they do not want to talk about it. This legislation has been introduced with great urgency. It was dumped on our desks on September 7 and we were told that if we did not get it out of the way by the end of the year one and a half million Canadians who are to be removed from the tax rolls would blame us. It should not require 707 pages in order to make some provision for the one and a half million people who would be concerned. This could have been done simply.

I shall close by repeating what was said by a gentleman who appeared on the T.V. program "Viewpoint". I do not know who the gentleman is, but I listen to common sense no matter from what source. He said:

Mr. Benson's tax reform bill is too bad to be patched up as it proceeds through Parliament. The only solution is to withdraw the Bill for re-writing. I know that everyone—the government especially—is anxious to be finally done with tax reform. Unless a few more months are spent re-drafting the Bill, however, Canadians are going to pay a terrible price for their impatience.