

Excise Tax Act

Mr. Speaker, that means going in the direction of a tax reform, towards a more fair and equitable tax system.

The same is true with the minimum income tax, Mr. Speaker. I remember that when we introduced the minimum income tax in December 1985, the Liberal Opposition was against it.

I also remember that the Leader of the New Democratic Party rose to congratulate us but the Liberal Opposition was against it. Do you know why, Mr. Speaker? I presume they opposed it because it was a good measure. They have opposed every good step we have taken. Or could it be that all Members of the Federal Liberal Party earn more than \$50,000 per year? That might be the other reason. I do not know. But it has to be either of them.

We should therefore give it some thought. We should also remember that when we deal with an increase of the federal sales tax, we may be told that it is going to hurt the farmers involved in tobacco production. We did think of them, however, and we thought of creating a special fund to help them. We really put a lot of thought into that federal sales tax increase which is not high for everyone . . . I am thinking, Mr. Speaker, of the assistance to farmers. We extended the duration of the fuel tax rebate program, we increased that rebate for farmers.

We did so because we wanted the increase to be fair and reasonable and the lower income brackets to be protected from the impact of that federal sales tax.

Mr. Speaker, I therefore submit that it is important to pass this Bill expeditiously, and I urge Members of the House to help it pass as quickly as possible in order for us to be able to proceed with our social programs as well as other economic and cultural programs of importance for our country and for all Canadians.

Once again, Mr. Speaker, following the Budget tabled last February 26, which was very well accepted and understood by Canadians of all levels, but appears unfortunately not to have been understood yet by the Opposition, I can assure you that we are going to carry on with this so that someday even the Opposition will understand it.

Mr. Alfonso Gagliano (Saint-Léonard—Anjou): Mr. Speaker, we have just heard a speech in which the Hon. Member tried to blame us for the deficit and referred in glowing terms to the Conservative Government's economic record.

Perhaps my hon. friend, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance (Mr. Vincent) was not in the House during the debate on the Speech from the Throne and did not read Hansard for the proceedings of the debate on October 23, 1986, at page 660, and starting on pages 674 and 675. At the time, Mr. Speaker, I quoted to the House an article by Alain Dubuc of *La Presse* in which he did an economic analysis of the Conservative Government two years after the elections.

Mr. Boudria: Say it again!

Mr. Gagliano: And obviously, after what he told us in his speech, Mr. Speaker, I will have to read a few quotes from Mr. Dubuc so that my hon. friend will know how his Government performed.

Mr. Speaker, on September 6, Mr. Dubuc said in his article:

"Measuring economic growth is the best way to find out whether the economy is progressing at an acceptable rate. Growth was 3.3 per cent in 1983 and 5 per cent in 1984, during the last two years of the Liberal reign. In 1985, under the Conservatives, the rate of progression dropped to 4.5 per cent and is not expected to exceed 3 per cent this year, since we are entering a slowdown phase, not a phase of progression".

Mr. Speaker, if the Conservative Government is proud of its economic record, and it is very fond of saying so, why is there no economic growth? And that is not all Mr. Dubuc said. Mr. Speaker, he referred to inflation as well.

The inflation rate had been reduced to 4 per cent in the summer of 1984 when the Liberals lost the election, and there has been no change since then.

My colleague mentioned the dollar. Our dollar was worth 77.14 cents U.S. in August 1984. How much is it worth today? Did you hear the latest news?

Mr. Boudria: Seventy cents!

Mr. Della Noce: And the 22 per cent interest rates. Look at them now.

Mr. Gagliano: Oh, yes, my colleague from Duvernay (Mr. Della Noce). Let us talk about interest rates. Will you have the nerve to take credit for lower interest rates as a result of Conservative Government action, or will you admit it just might be due to the American policy? Interest rates have gone down on international money markets throughout the world. So now you know!

Mr. Waddell: Mulroney said that the Hon. Member for Duvernay is very important. Maybe so, but he is not in the Cabinet!

Mr. Gagliano: Of course, the Hon. Member for Duvernay is very important.

Mr. Waddell: But he is not in the Cabinet!

Mr. Vincent: Don't tell me you are going to support the Hon. Member for Saint-Léonard—Anjou!

Mr. Gagliano: He is the only Conservative Member of Italian origin, but he has yet to join the Cabinet.

If I may continue, Mr. Speaker. That is not all Mr. Dubuc had to say. He referred to the purchasing power, which indeed relates to Bill C-14. If only my colleague would listen, he might learn something.

Speaking about the purchasing power, Mr. Speaker, and I quote: