

*Adjournment Debate*

served by taxing this particular aircraft? I suggest there is none.

When the minister says there is nothing he can do about it I would remind him and anyone who is listening, that as minister if he wants to change the Excise Tax Act—if that is necessary—if he wants to change the regulations—if that is necessary—then he can do that. No one else can but he can. Any crocodile tears that he sheds are just that; they are not sincere.

I want to point out that the minister apparently does not even know, perhaps his officials have not advised him, that under Section 17 of the Financial Administration Act, a remission can be given for this tax. As almost everyone knows, that section provides that the governor in council—that means cabinet—on the recommendation of the Treasury Board and whenever it is considered to be in the public interest, may remit any tax, fee or penalty.

The section is a lengthy one and it has been used many times in this country. As I said recently, Mr. Speaker, this is the reason that Canadians are so fed up with a government that has a majority and that could do something for a volunteer organization but will not do anything. Either the minister will not do anything because he does not know the law or has not the courage to try to change it or he is getting bad advice from his officials. In any event, absolutely nothing is being done, and that is a shame. The one thing that people are entitled to expect from a minister who has the power, is that if it is in the public interest to do something, then he will do it.

I should like to know from the parliamentary secretary, who has to answer for the minister tonight, why the minister will not avail himself of the courses available to him, including use of the Financial Administration Act, to correct this ridiculous situation. Everyone in the province of British Columbia thinks it is completely ridiculous. They cannot understand why a minister who has the power to do something just says, "That is the law and I will not do anything". In effect, that is what is happening and I should like some answers.

**Mr. Douglas Fisher (Parliamentary Secretary to Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance):** Mr. Speaker, I enjoyed the arguments put forward by the hon. member although I am sorry that at the end he allowed himself to get in so many cheap political shots. Initially he raised some good discussion and I should like to deal with that.

The hon. member knows there is a big difference between some kind of government program as a social policy and a specific tax law. He is asking us to use the tax law because someone is operating a valuable social service. It is as if we should reward them for doing that.

In the debates that have taken place about the budget since last November, we have seen the kind of confusion that happens when tax law is used to promote undefined or ill defined or hard to define social goals. People use the tax law for personal gain or corporate gain in the name of some social benefit. Since November the government has been trying to

draw a clear distinction between tax policy on the one hand and social policy on the other.

• (2215)

Let me make it quite clear that we regard the services provided by the group the member is representing as valuable and laudable services. We do not call them into question. At the same time we ask whether the tax policy is the proper place to offer incentives for that kind of service. Why not go to the minister of transport, federal or provincial? Why not go to some other ministers, health or social services of any sort, and ask for a grant under those provisions?

**Mr. Fraser:** Because your minister can create the exemptions, that is why.

**Mr. Fisher:** That would be much better than what the hon. member is trying to promote. He wants us to get back into this fuzzy area where tax policy is used on behalf of one specific group for the benefit society gains from that group's activities. We do not quarrel with the fact that these benefits are laudable and significant, but we simply ask him to put the pressure in the right place. I think that is a reasonable request to make. If he sees the distinction between tax policy and social policy, then I think he will understand why the minister cannot apply the law as loosely as he personally wanted.

**Mr. Fraser:** We will go to the Minister of National Health and Welfare (Miss Bégin); perhaps she can do something.

CANADIAN PACIFIC RAILWAY—ANNOUNCEMENT OF LAY-OFFS.  
(B) REQUEST THAT EMPLOYEES BE RETAINED IN EMPLOYMENT

**Mr. David Orlikow (Winnipeg North):** Mr. Speaker, one week ago the CPR announced a four-week lay-off of 3,600 shop craft workers in Montreal, Winnipeg and Calgary. Thirteen hundred of those were in Winnipeg. This announcement followed the lay-off of 311 workers by the CPR for an indefinite period. I asked the minister last Friday whether it made sense for the CPR to be laying off large numbers of workers because of a decline in traffic, given the fact that, by the government's own calculation, there would be impressively large increases in various commodity shipments in the next few years. The minister's reply was completely unsatisfactory. He said the CPR just did not have the business to keep these people on.

Yesterday, Mr. Speaker, the CNR announced a similar lay-off in its repair shops, a major share of which will again take place in Winnipeg. The reason given by the railways is quite simple: traffic is down because of the slowdown in our economy.

The question I posed to the government is whether the present slowdown should be the only factor in such a major decision on cutbacks. Recently the president of the Sony corporation was in Canada attending a seminar at which Japanese and North American business operations were analysed and compared. We have all heard about the success of the Japanese economy, its steady and large increase in gross