

2. In each case (a) who was the Minister (b) what was the fee (c) what was the occasion of the speech (d) who was the freelance or contract writer?

Return tabled.

FIREARMS

Question No. 2,533—**Mr. Whiteway:**

1. For the year 1974, how many crimes were committed in which firearms were used?

2. How many crimes were committed in which knives, clubs, axes, scissors etc. were used?

3. How many such firearms used were (a) unrestricted (b) restricted but unregistered (c) restricted but registered and, in each case, how many (i) murders (ii) homicides (iii) suicides were committed?

4. What is the official estimate of (a) unrestricted (b) restricted but unregistered (c) restricted but registered firearms in Canada?

Return tabled.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

EXCISE TAX ACT

The House resumed, from Wednesday, July 16, consideration of the motion of Mr. Turner (Ottawa-Carleton) that Bill C-66, to amend the Excise Tax Act, be read the second time and referred to committee of the whole; and the amendment thereto of Mr. Stanfield (p. 7416).

Mr. Robert Muir (Cape Breton-The Sydneys): Mr. Speaker, I am disappointed that the Minister of Finance (Mr. Turner) has had to leave the chamber.

An hon. Member: He is back.

Mr. Muir: I am happy to see him return; I am sure that, of all members, he would want to hear what I have to say. Mr. Speaker, it is very difficult to criticize this minister because he really is a pretty fine guy. It is difficult to hit him hard. I shall try not to be too hard on him and his budget proposals.

Yesterday evening, just before the hour of the adjournment at six o'clock, I was referring to the fact that after the budget, when this resolution came on, all the members of the cabinet, it seemed to me, divorced themselves from the minister, from the budget and, in particular, from the resolution before us—this iniquitous tax to which I referred last night. So far I have not heard anyone come to the minister's defence saying how wonderful this measure is and what a great idea it was. I would hope some Liberal members, although of course not all, would support the minister, particularly the bumbling House leader who messes up everything: I would hope that he, at least, would support the Minister of Finance who in this case needs much support.

● (1510)

I also asked if the government could defend this tax, but of course there is no defence whatsoever. The budget and

Excise Tax Act

this resolution will increase the degree of inflation that has become such a cruel and crushing blow for all Canadians, but especially for the poor and the elderly who are fixed incomes. It means that next winter will be even more severe for them than last winter, and that their savings—if indeed they have any—will be eaten up at an even faster rate. It will also mean that many small businesses which have their backs to the wall as a result of the government's diabolical policies will face closure and bankruptcy.

Indeed, we are seeing the results of closure of industries in Cape Breton Island at the moment. Lay-offs and unemployment will become even more commonplace in the days ahead, although goodness knows the situation is bad enough now and I do not want to see any more lay-offs and unemployment.

It is all very well for the Minister of Finance to tell us that things are picking up in the United States, and how wonderful that is, just as he has told us in the last few years that because the economy is bad in the United States it will be bad here. He blamed many things on the weather. I think he also talked about praying, and so on, but it has not had much success. It is all very well for the minister to suggest that we read the glowing testimony of selected economists who say that we are just around the corner from recovering from the recession, which indeed has worsened because of the policies of this government, but it will take more than glowing statements to convince the people of my constituency that we are anywhere but in the throes of deep depression on Cape Breton Island.

Unemployment there at the moment is between 15 per cent and 20 per cent at a minimum. Every aspect of our economy is in desperate trouble. The figures I have quoted are produced by the office of the Minister of Manpower and his officials. I suggest that, if anything, they are conservative figures, considering the source from which they came. Last year in my riding we faced the loss of the General Instruments plant, which meant the loss of close to 1,000 jobs. That was indeed a major blow to our economy. Regardless of the suggested efforts to overcome that disaster, we still have an empty plant and we still have 1,000 former employees seeking jobs that do not exist.

What will this ten-cent a gallon tax on gasoline do for those people? Will it assist them? I am afraid not. When these unemployed men and women are told they will have to pay ten cents more for a gallon of gasoline, and more for the oil to heat their homes out of their UIC cheques that are quickly coming to an end, if they have not already, there will be little appreciation for the logic of the budget or its intent.

Yesterday Mr. Speaker announced that the Minister of Finance had given permission for a new coin to be struck to celebrate the one-hundredth anniversary of the Library of Parliament. At the same time it might be well for the minister to have a new ten-cent piece struck to commemorate this tax he is imposing: on one side of it there could be an effigy of the minister with his hand in the taxpayer's pocket.

As a result of the problems I have outlined, instead of new hope we face new disasters one on top of the other. We have just learned of the forthcoming closure of the Canadian Motor Industries plant and the elimination of 70