

Excise

This particular aspect of the matter was very thoroughly outlined by the hon. member for Northwest Territories.

Great care should be taken when we consider burdening our transportation system further because we should remember that Canada is a victim of its size and geography when transportation is considered.

The word victim is a little poor. We are a captive of size and geography in this country. Anything we can do to overcome this by rapid, economical and non-heavy energy consuming methods should be encouraged. I continue the quotation:

If any type of user tax is to be considered, the following points are important:

- i) As fair as possible
- ii) On use, not capital
- iii) Administrative ease and cost

On all three counts a tax on aviation fuel would best serve the aviation community and the country. Because it would be a volume tax it would bear an accurate relationship to the amount of services and facilities required.

That means more flying, more fuel, more tax.

With a charge against use, operators would pay as they produced, and so save crippling capital burdens. The tax could be levied as an increase of the amount of federal sales tax on the fuel and so there would be no administration and there would be no change except in the rate.

As the minister has been reminded more than once during this debate, the aircraft industry is an important factor in the Canadian economy. No tax of any kind in any area should be punitive, but that is exactly what this particular tax is, Mr. Chairman.

Transportation is a public service. It should be a responsibility of government to keep it healthy. We on this side of the House have tried in a variety of ways to persuade the government to produce a transportation policy. Now we have the Minister of Finance doing everything he can to destroy one aspect of a policy. Have pity on the man, let him get on with his policy, don't chop him down before he gets going. The proposed tax has so far spread confusion and fear throughout the industry and has caused an immediate plunge in the sales of new aircraft.

It is time the minister took another look at these particular measures. They have been criticized from all sides of the House. There are some amendments that have been proposed. I do not know whether the Chair is prepared to rule on and divide them. I certainly feel that most members who have spoken will be supporting the amendments proposed by the hon. member for Moncton insofar as they affect the removal of lines 26 to 39 on page 11. That covers subparagraphs 11 and 12 of this particular item. I conclude by indicating my full support for that particular aspect of the amendment moved by the hon. member for Moncton.

Mr. Huntington: Mr. Chairman, 30 per cent of the people in my constituency own boats. We live on a mountain side. If it were not for this, airports for private aircraft would be involved as my constituency houses many west coast executives.

We have had a very good debate on these two items, subparagraphs 11 and 12 of clause 21. However, I am extremely concerned because we have not been able to convince the minister that this is a very negative type of legislation and is interfering with the passage of the bill. The minister stated that the reasons for these two items

are additional revenue and energy conservation. The additional revenue will amount to \$30 million. It is hard to understand why this revenue is needed.

On returning home last night after a day's work here, I read that CIDA is in a rush to spend \$117 million. They are trying to cram that into a year's budget spending. Let me quote from an article which appeared in yesterday's *Ottawa Journal* as follows:

● (1550)

"Your career in CIDA depends on how you spend," a former agency official said. "You are constantly being hammered over the head and told 'Spend Spend Spend'."

It's not how well you spend your money, but quantitatively. Can you spend the budget allocated to you? That's what counts."

A second official said: "The whole criteria here is spend. Anyone who says it isn't, doesn't know the facts."

Later in the article we have reference to the administrative turmoil in the agency's offices. When clauses like this are put into legislation affecting the country's business we are just adding further turmoil for the business community of the country.

The minister talks about conservation, but what does he say about swimming pools?

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Huntington: There are many swimming pools across this country, not just the one going in at 24 Sussex Drive. These swimming pools require heating. Do we have any excise tax on them? The minister picks on what he thinks is a small segment of the population, the recreational field of boating.

Mention has been made of mobile campers which increase fuel consumption to the extent of achieving only four miles per gallon. Increased consumption in this regard is far in excess of consumption by the average boat motor. May I point out that total boat energy consumption in this country is less than one quarter of one per cent of total energy consumption?

Another area in which we might save, removing the necessity for this type of imposition on the boat industry, particularly in my part of the country, is in respect of Information Canada. If one starts to look into that he will find areas there which, if corrected, would make this tax unnecessary as a source of revenue. There are three Information Canada offices which cannot even justify their cash flows in respect of costs of supplies and labour, let alone overhead. Why should these not be put into the private sector where they could be administered and operated at a profit rather than at a loss to the federal treasury?

As one reads through the Auditor General's reports he finds all kinds of areas of abuse by the government which could be tightened up. Why does the government not concern itself with tightening up these areas of government spending? I have in mind cash flows and accounting abuses, money not returned against grants, and other areas of wasteful expenditure.

Here we are imposing this negative legislation on a business community in British Columbia. This does nothing constructive in respect of unemployment. How can I go back and support or justify these two items in this bill