

Mr. Don Blenkarn (Mississauga South): Very briefly, I am wondering whether the minister had the figures as to the tax loss which the country would suffer if we accepted motion No. 29. After all, the present bill before us exempts limbs with or without power, accessories and devices therefor, spinal and other orthopaedic braces. All the motion does is say, generally, devices which are:

—made to order for a crippled, deformed or otherwise debilitated person;—

It is not much of an extension. Surely, the minister and his departmental officials have looked closely at the amendment. I think the minister has a duty, in this Year of the Handicapped, to say to what extent the revenue is impaired by refusing this motion. I suggest to the minister that the loss of revenue is so inconsequential as to not even form a change in the estimated revenue received. That being the case, in the interest of the Year of the Handicapped, and in light of a report on obstacles about which the minister spoke highly, this motion ought to be accepted, and I demand that the minister give us the figures.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Bussières: Mr. Speaker, on this point of order, I would like to point out to the hon. member that the grounds for imposing a tax should not rest mainly on the revenues it will generate, if that tax is to be collected on a specific item. That is not the only reason. First, the kind of rhetoric used by the hon. member for Broadview-Greenwood (Mr. Rae) is quite easy. It is simply a matter of referring to the extremely difficult situation of the handicapped. But this is not necessarily the best way to help them. I have indicated that a report has been prepared, and we must ask ourselves which is the best course of action, even within our taxation system. We know that excise tax is but a very narrow aspect of the general taxation system. Within the over-all taxation system, what is the best way of helping the handicapped? Such is the question to be addressed. In the light of the committee report, once it has been thoroughly examined, we will give a much more exhaustive answer to the needs of the handicapped, and by adopting the best answer we will give still more emphasis on the concerns of the government and the response of society to the Year of the Handicapped.

● (1600)

[*English*]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Blaker): Is the House ready for the question?

Some hon. Members: Question.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Blaker): Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the said motion?

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

Some hon. Members: No.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Blaker): All those in favour of the said motion will please say yea.

Excise Tax

Some hon. Members: Yea.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Blaker): All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. Members: Nay.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Blaker): In my opinion, the nays have it.

And more than five members having risen:

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Blaker): Pursuant to section 11 of Standing Order 75, the recorded division on the proposed motion stands deferred.

The House will now deal with motion No. 30.

Hon. Marcel Lambert (Edmonton West) moved:

Motion No. 30.

That Bill C-57, an act to amend the Excise Tax Act and the Excise Act and to provide for a revenue tax in respect of petroleum and gas, be amended by deleting Clause 34.

He said: Mr. Speaker, this really is a motion that my friends from the Atlantic provinces are interested in. It means that fishermen will have to pay the sales tax on a good deal of their equipment. They will be permitted to draw back but they will be dealing through their regular outlets, the small stores and outfitters. The paperwork involved will make it self-defeating. My colleagues from Newfoundland tell me that this will be a pest for the fishermen; it is another handicap. The only beneficiary will be the government. If it is too difficult to claim a draw back after the equipment has been purchased, then the government will be the beneficiary.

In these circumstances, why does the government have to go after sales tax on this type of equipment? It was not done before. Now not only the Newfoundland but the Quebec fishermen in the gulf are in the same boat.

[*Translation*]

I wonder why they are being treated like that! In my opinion, it is just another nuisance in people's life especially those involved. What is the reason for it? For instance, they may suffer a disaster and have to replace their lines and other equipment. An additional tax of 9 per cent is a considerable amount for those people. They must find a place where they can get credit and afterwards they will have to fill an application to get a refund from the government. In such circumstances, the government usually takes up to three or four months to process the application for refund and, upon final approval, the whole matter is referred to the Department of Supply and Services which in turn takes over a month to issue a cheque. Now, why should those people be treated in such a way? The government will not be making any money, since they will be entitled to a refund. Therefore it is an exercise in futility. On behalf of my colleagues from Newfoundland and Nova Scotia, I am introducing this amendment and I would ask my colleagues to support it.