

Election Promises

posal. He spoke of it in Vancouver in October of 1976. His finance critic spoke in August of 1979 about their plan to do away with indexing and to put that kind of burden on the poor of Canada. We do not know, naturally, if they spoke for all in their party. We have not heard the hon. member for New Westminster-Coquitlam or others who normally take issue with the positions which the party spokesmen take. We do not know if she will prevail or they will prevail, but that at least is their position on the record. They want to attack the principle of indexing. They want to impose that kind of burden upon the poor of the country.

I say that it was this party, under the leadership of my distinguished predecessor, the Hon. Bob Stanfield, which pioneered the concept of indexation and finally forced a former Liberal government to enact that concept. This party has no intention of allowing the present government to proceed with their plan to take away that benefit from the people of Canada.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Clark: The Government of Canada has the responsibility to lead the fight against inflation. Without indexation the government has a vested interest in profiting from inflation. That is unacceptable to this party, unacceptable to the people of Canada, and it should be unacceptable to this Parliament.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Clark: The government has a responsibility, if it wants to increase its revenue, to put tax proposals openly and—although I find it difficult to associate this word with the government—honestly before Parliament and before the people. De-indexation is a back door tax increase. That is unacceptable to the people of this country, it is unacceptable to this party, and it should be unacceptable to this Parliament. I say to the government, and especially to the Minister of Finance: If you need more tax revenues, deal with that need honestly, openly and responsibly. I say to him that tax revenues to help reduce the deficit are one matter; tax revenues simply to feed the appetite of this government to spend the public's money is something else. We on this side of the House will oppose any budget which seeks to inflict upon Canadians higher taxes and higher deficits.

This motion today allows us the opportunity not only to draw to the attention of Parliament and of the public the record of inconsistency of the New Democratic Party, but also allows us, through an amendment, to have the House of Commons express its position on the question of indexation. Therefore I move, seconded by the hon. member for St. John's West (Mr. Crosbie):

That the motion be amended by adding the following: "and in particular rejects the plan to de-index the personal income taxes of Canadians."

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Blaker): The House has heard the motion of the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Clark). While I am on my feet, may I bring something to the attention of hon.

members. The Chair was in some confusion about whether or not Standing Order 58(13) applied. Having consulted the Standing Orders, I want to indicate that if it is the Minister of Finance (Mr. MacEachen) who is next to take the floor, he will have 30 minutes in which to speak.

Hon. Allan J. MacEachen (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, in a sense the debate this afternoon reproduces the amendment which led to the defeat of the former government last December. I was somewhat amused when the New Democratic Party revived this amendment. I thought they wanted to recapture, for even a brief few hours, their moment of glory of last December when they drafted an amendment upon which we voted and brought down the government. They should not take too much pride in their craftsmanship because I would tell them that the words may not have been very important in reaching that particular decision.

An hon. Member: You are right.

An hon. Member: Marriage breakups are always messy.

Mr. MacEachen: The occasion has been used by the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Clark) to recount the alleged losses experienced by the Canadian people since last December. From my point of view, the recreation of the amendment allows us to reflect upon the number of positive things which have happened since last December and, more particularly, to discuss some of the economic problems which face the country at present.

● (1610)

I welcome the views expressed by the Leader of the New Democratic Party (Mr. Broadbent) and the Leader of the Opposition, and I assure them I will reflect a great deal upon the advice they have presented this afternoon.

If hon. members look back at the motion moved by the Liberal party last December, they will see the reason we voted to get rid of the Tory government and what has influenced our thinking since returning to office. Obviously the Liberal party, at that time the official opposition, had the opportunity to move the main motion, which was amended by the New Democratic Party, and it was upon the vote on the amendment that the government was defeated.

The motion moved by the hon. member for Windsor West, the Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce (Mr. Gray), was:

—this House condemns the government for its budget which will place an unfair and unnecessary burden of higher gasoline prices, higher fuel oil prices, and higher taxes on middle and lower-income Canadians.

At a time when Canadians were faced with higher energy prices because of the actions of the OPEC countries, we believed that to add 18 cents a gallon to the cost of gasoline was unfair and would be damaging to the Canadian economy. That tax is gone. We believed that during a period of high energy crisis and difficult inflation, to ask low and middle-income earners to pay to subsidize those Canadians who are at