

Excise Tax Act

them that they will get it soon. Everything is soon, but sometimes soon is a long, long time coming, if one listens to some of the replies from this government with regard to the various things it is going to do. However, we are still waiting.

It is a very serious dilemma which faces the country, and there is nothing in this legislation which will do anything but aggravate the problem we face. It will increase unemployment and inflation. It will probably stoke the fires of both. It will convince a great many people who were anticipating going into business or getting out of business that they should make either decision immediately because of government policy. There will be more expenses loaded on to their backs, and that will convince them that they should not try to keep their companies going or that they should not try to set up new companies to produce the jobs we require, because they will just have to face one more taxation burden. There is nothing but rank discrimination against a very small group of people, really, associated with this bill. If everyone whom the minister says will receive a rebate receives a rebate, then we will end up with just the poor, the helpless and the working person left to pay the bill.

While we in eastern Canada are anxious to have some system worked out whereby we can have our oil, gas and heating fuel at the same price, available in all parts of the country, even though we are dependent upon offshore oil which is more expensive and even though we appreciate that there is a two-price system and that we are paying less, I cannot accept the fact that the small segment of people in this nation who will end up having to pay this tax should be the only ones asked to carry the extra burden so that we have a two-price system. There must be a better way, where all Canadians can join together and contribute so that this burden is handled in a more equitable and just fashion, than is the case with this legislation.

I will support the amendment of my leader that the bill be given a six-month hoist, and I will certainly vote against the bill if we ever reach the day when it is allowed to come to a vote.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gérard Laprise (Abitibi): Madam Speaker, I am beginning to doubt it would be possible to make the minister and the government give way in their attitude towards Canadian workers. That is why I will be as brief as possible in my remarks.

I think Bill C-66 now being considered is the residue of the budget speech of June 23 which in turn is a residue of the 1974 general election. Had the voters re-elected a minority government the contents of the budget speech would have been quite different. Or still if a general election were to take place in the fall of 1975 or early in 1976 we would not have seen the tripping just inflicted by the Minister of Finance (Mr. Turner) on the average worker in Canada.

The Canadian government is seeking by all possible means to increase its revenues, and it takes on the average citizen with Bill C-66. From the start of this debate there was a lot of talk about the 10 cent tax imposed on every gallon of gas consumed especially by the worker who must go to work to earn his living. He finds that it costs more

and more to earn enough to support himself and his family to the point where it is sometimes preferable to live on social welfare. And one often meets, Madam Speaker, Canadian workers who ask themselves: Should we continue to work to produce consumer goods when we cannot even expect recognition for our service to the community?

And people living on social welfare benefits, for example, do not at all have to face the kind of expenses by which the Canadian worker is beset. Indeed, the worker must pay increasingly higher federal and provincial taxes on his income. He will soon have to pay increased contributions to the Unemployment Insurance Commission. He must also pay ever higher contributions to the Quebec or Canada Pension Plans. The amounts paid for medicare are also higher, and it is the same thing for his mandatory inclusion in a labour union. We witnessed just that this past weekend.

The Canadian worker is wondering if he is not a fool, or being fooled in the responsibility entrusted to him to produce the goods and services necessary to the well-being of his fellow citizens. Why is the worker always the one to suffer? What is the objective of the government?

Having heard the budget speech on June 23 last, the Quebec Minister of Transport stated that the government had done the right thing when it levied an excise tax on gas, because we would need fewer highways. The federal government is well supported by the Quebec Liberal government. An average increase of \$100 for automobile insurance has just been allowed in Quebec and the price of automobile licences will also go up by 50 per cent in 1976. You see, Madam Speaker, that the Quebec citizen finds it ever more difficult to meet his obligations.

I remember that the federal government once levied a direct tax of 13 cents per gallon of gas. When it gave up that tax, the Quebec government under the National Union immediately started to collect it for its own purposes. As the Minister of Finance made sure that Quebec will also give up that 10 cents tax per gallon of gas? I do not think so.

We now pay in Quebec a direct federal and provincial tax of at least 32 cents on each gallon of gas. In the northwestern area of Quebec where I live, some service stations are selling red gas 93 cents a gallon and we will soon pay almost \$1. It is the most costly and the red colour of the gas is perhaps what is most painful for the worker.

Mr. Speaker, that is reason enough to prevent any member from voting for the bill, but there are others: the air travel tax increase, for instance. Indeed, a provision of Bill C-66 raises the air travel tax by 3 per cent. We know that airlines, be it Air Canada, CP Air or others, are seeking higher fares and the tax, which will jump from 5 to 8 per cent, will add to the cost of tickets.

But we know that the great majority of air travellers are representatives of companies or governments whose travelling expenses are tax deductible. That is why fares can go up indefinitely before companies complain too much. It is however unjust towards those who pay their own tickets and get no tax deduction or compensation from employers or companies. As we know, people use the plane or try to use it because it is a more convenient mode of transportation to visit friends, to attend to personal busi-