

*Personal Exemptions*

**Mr. A. C. Abbott (Mississauga):** Mr. Speaker, I join with my colleagues in congratulating the hon. member for Bellechasse (Mr. Lambert) on the spirit with which he introduced his motion and the warm sentiments that lay behind it. It brings out the practical problems and difficulties in tuning the tax system to carry out the kind of reform that the hon. member suggests, however.

The hon. member for Scarborough West (Mr. Martin) and the hon. member for Halton (Mr. Philbrook) have gone into some detail as to why the progressive tax system cannot lend itself to the type of immediate reform suggested in the motion, and pointed out that very large revenues would be lost.

The problem lies, of course, partly in the party to which the hon. member belongs. For many years it has been prepared to hand money out, notwithstanding the consequences to the economy. In the province of Alberta where the Social Credit Party had its original flowering, Bill Aberhart used to conduct his campaigns in a most dramatic fashion. I am told by those who lived in Alberta in those days that when he addressed a public meeting he would have a huge cheque and a vast pen ready. He would call out, "Is there anyone out there who would like to come up and write a cheque for Alberta?" A young man would immediately run up—it was always the same young man—and write a cheque for \$25 payable to every citizen in Alberta.

That young man rose through the ranks and later became premier of Alberta. When he arrived at that position of high eminence, however, the ink had run dry, and it was only the oil bubbling from the ground that allowed him to distribute largesse among the people in a conservative fashion.

**Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre):** Mr. Speaker, would the hon. member permit a question? I wonder if he realizes how much his voice and appearance right now remind some of us of Bill Aberhart.

**Mr. Douglas (Nanaimo-Cowichan-The Islands):** He hasn't got the girth.

**Mr. Abbott:** I am getting the girth. I am sure that is as close to being an insult as the House will permit, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Paproski:** The same premier fulfilled his obligation and gave the people a right to \$25.

**Mr. Abbott:** Mr. Speaker, I attempted to suggest that same premier was able to take the people's money in the form of non-renewable resources and spread it very generally among the citizens of Alberta. It was not as a result of Social Credit theory, however, but because Alberta was blessed with great natural resources.

The problem is that Alberta has always been attracted to either wild or reactionary political theories, and has all too seldom shown wisdom in electing members to the House of Commons. I think that is a strike against it. I had the pleasure and privilege of living in Calgary for four years, and that was the one unattractive aspect of life there. One looked behind one's member of parliament and found a Tory rather than a Liberal. I was driven from the province by that sad state of affairs.

[Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre).]

**Mr. Paproski:** It will be the same for the next 100 years.

**Mr. Abbott:** As my hon. friends have endeavoured to show, the Government of Canada does not have the privilege of going to public meetings and writing big cheques. It has the responsibility for paying the bills for the enormous services that ordinary citizens enjoy today. I could refer in detail to the various health benefits, veterans' pensions and allowances, family allowances, the vast social welfare apparatus that has been created for the benefit of Canadians, as well as the other heavy responsibilities and demands. We have a tax system that will take account of the money that can be raised, take account of the equity for ordinary citizens and provide the kind of benefits that they need.

The hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles) would have us engage in a form of irresponsible policy to carry out his social motivations. Nobody would question his sincerity, but it goes to the essential point—whether a government is going to be credible. I think this government has demonstrated this kind of fiscal responsibility. It is prepared to make the kind of hard decisions that were made in the last budget—that it is going to cut expenses and manage the affairs of the country in a responsible and prudent fashion.

Whatever the objectives we might have, to provide greater benefits to citizens and raise their income through making it possible for them to be spared payment of income tax, all the desirable things we may achieve have to be placed in the context of a responsible attitude.

● (1650)

Let me deal briefly with the irresponsibility of a provincial government which is supposedly imbued with Tory principles and a sense of responsibility. I am referring to the government of the province of Ontario.

**Mr. Baker (Grenville-Carleton):** That is a great government.

**Mr. Abbott:** The hon. member thinks it is a great government. One earnestly hopes it will soon be defeated. In the last few weeks it has tried to bolster its sagging image among the people of Ontario with a series of irresponsible moves, one of which is the reduction of sales tax for a limited period.

**Mr. Paproski:** We don't want politics in this debate, do we?

**Mr. Abbott:** There you see a government acting most irresponsibly. It has reduced the sales tax for the rest of this year, and thus served notice that the reduction will remain in force until after the next provincial election. That government has imposed a spurious 90-day freeze on the price of oil. It thinks the people have been misled into thinking it is acting responsibly. I am sure most citizens of Ontario will tell the present governing party of Ontario what they think of it, by electing a provincial Liberal government.

Finally, we must consider that government's irresponsible behaviour on the question of Pickering airport. I know that people on both sides feel strongly about this matter. And, Mr. Speaker, my comments are not so far