

Income Tax Act

Several months ago we were given a white paper which was fairly understandable. Even the laymen in Canada could understand the terrible proposals that were being made. There was almost a revolution against the proposals in the white paper. I suggest the government never really planned to introduce these proposals. It was the old shock treatment; hit them hard and when they object hit them half as hard and then they will think that everything is rosy. It is the same old story, government by crisis. The government promotes, encourages and develops crises in Canada, then does not have a clue how to deal with the crises they have helped to develop. Canadians are beginning to realize that this government talks in high gear but performs in low gear. Canadians were swept off their feet in 1968. They have been waiting since that time for this government to change gears.

Mr. Nowlan: It has been giving Canadians the gears.

Mr. Peddle: I am not going to attempt to deal with any particular area of this 707 page monstrosity. To do so might convey, at least to my constituents, the idea that I understand what this is all about. I am not going to be so pompous as to pretend I understand what this is about when the lawyers and tax experts throughout the country say that they do not understand it. I am not going to even attempt to try.

Mr. Mahoney: You are doing all right.

Mr. Peddle: As a Canadian who has been watching the performance of this government which promised so much to the people of this country in the past three years, I cannot help but ask a very simple question. Canadians appreciate the promise in this monstrosity of larger exemptions for the lower income people. We appreciate the suggestion that there will be some relief to our older taxpayers. We do not understand the other several hundred pages that try to justify the other taxes that will be imposed to make up for the few little crumbs thrown out to the lower income and elderly people. Taxation is not a one way street. It implies a reasonable, responsible extraction of taxes from the people and it also must of necessity pay some attention to the reasonable, responsible distribution or disposition of the taxes so collected. No one can tell me that the passage of this bill has suddenly become urgent. It landed on our desks some time in September. Government supporters say: Treat this as urgent or the 1½ million taxpayers who are to be dropped from the tax rolls won't get their goodies next year. It is an old story which the premier of Newfoundland has been using for years—if you want your half pint of ice cream you will have to gulp your seven gallons of cod liver oil first.

• (3:40 p.m.)

On Friday we heard from the hon. member for Ottawa West (Mr. Francis), the Liberal party whip. He spoke in his most honeyed tones. He was conciliatory. That is a most important quality in a whip; he has to be a master of conciliation. In his most honeyed tones he implored us not to delay the bill any longer—"What are you fellows up to, delaying this important measure? Get it out of here and into committee."

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

[Mr. Peddle.]

Mr. Peddle: What he was really saying was: Your debate on this subject embarrasses us. Get it out of here and into the obscurity of the committee, with half a dozen members sitting on it and maybe a small fraction of the press attending. This was what underlay the conciliatory message from the Liberal whip, and I don't blame him for trying, but it is not going to work.

Mr. Francis: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a question of privilege. The hon. member has quoted me as saying I wanted the bill referred to committee on which a few obscure members would be serving. Does he not realize that this bill will be referred to a committee of the whole House to which every member belongs and requires a quorum of 20 members?

Mr. Peddle: It is a very unsanitary thing, but the hon. member is putting words into my mouth. I did not say "obscure members". I said he wanted it referred to an obscure committee. As to the obscurity of the committee system, I say this to be quoted, it has no other effect but to destroy Parliament, generally speaking. Measures of importance to the country are taken from the chamber and shunted into semi-obscurity in some other part of Parliament Hill. They are subjected to the scrutiny of only a small fraction of hon. members.

The bill before us is called a reform package. Look at a dictionary and look up what "reform" means. The first definition is: "to make better by removing faults and defects"; the second definition is "by putting a stop to abuses and malpractices". Another is: "to abandon that which is evil and corrupt and return it to good state". This bill does none of those things. It does what it is designed to do—to further confuse the Canadian taxpayer.

As the beginning of sensible tax reform in this country, I would suggest that the 1½ million people who are to be removed from the tax rolls should be removed without delay. It should have been done long ago. Members opposite should not wait until the eve of an election to do it. A proposal like that did not need to be part of these 707 pages before us; it could have been done in a simple bill. Was it necessary to include in this bill machinery for increasing exemptions to those in receipt of lower incomes? No. That is a bit of the ice cream you get with the cod liver oil.

Reasonable tax reform must include assurances that the money collected will be sensibly spent. I have not heard this mentioned. Nothing has been said about ending the extravagance and waste which is going on in this country. It seems to me we could support the exemptions, the little bit of relaxation which the bill provides for those on low incomes and for older citizens, by making a concerted effort to cut out some of this waste and extravagance of which we see so much evidence.

I will give hon. members some examples. Take Information Canada, the whole kit and caboodle. I would suggest that 50 per cent of what is spent on that is wasted. Take the story of the *Bonaventure*. Let us make sure there is no recurrence of that kind of thing, and save some of the taxpayers' money. What about the ridiculous Committee on Youth that cost only God knows how much and came up with God only knows what recommendations. The opportunities for Youth program was concerned with—

Mr. Paproski: Opportunities for waste.