

The federal government cannot of course give such large amounts to the other provinces and draw them only from the revenue of these provinces, but the government is bound to distribute its revenue fairly and to treat every Canadian on the same basis. However, that is not what is happening today, since the central government treats Quebec taxpayers as inferior citizens because they want to keep their taxation sources.

Some hon. Members: Shame!

Mr. Balcer: I am convinced that no taxpayer from the other provinces would tolerate such treatment. The federal government cannot say that the means are lacking since it would be ready to grant \$123 million to the province of Quebec. Neither can it say that the amount involved would have to come from the other provinces since the amount earmarked for Quebec does not serve to increase the total amount of the grants going to the other provinces when Quebec does not accept it. Since 1946, Quebec has left this amount to the federal government. The Minister of Finance may say to himself that this money might be used to reduce the national debt but if the citizens of the province of Quebec like to pay their debts they do not want to have to pay the whole of the national debt.

Some hon. Members: Oh! Oh!

Mr. Balcer: Attempts have always been made to strip Quebec of her rights of taxation. I believe that the reaction of the province of Quebec towards the provincial income tax as well as the position taken by the different associations which came before the Tremblay commission should make it quite clear to the central government that our people cherish their rights.

When deduction was granted to companies last year, the Minister of Finance said that he did not want to place the companies of the province of Quebec in a position of inferiority just because the provincial government had not signed a tax agreement. Well, we ask the federal government to do for the small taxpayers of Quebec what they have done for the big corporations.

Mr. Chevrier: You know something about big corporations.

Mr. Balcer: I suppose the Minister of Transport knows nothing about them, has never heard a thing about them!

One must not forget that the 15 per cent deduction which is asked for the taxpayers of Quebec will apply to 300,000 taxpayers, while the federal tax applies to 600,000 taxpayers, which means that the total amount paid to

Income Tax—Deduction of Quebec Tax
the Quebec treasury by the taxpayers will represent only 7 or 8 per cent of the amount paid to the federal government.

Mr. Lesage: This is where the mistake is made.

Mr. Balcer: My friends opposite may think that the provincial government in levying that tax only from those who are better off financially is not following the same method as the federal government but I believe it is fair—

Mr. Langlois (Gaspé): That is where the mistake is made.

Mr. Balcer: The people of Quebec, no more than the provincial government, do not follow to the letter the instructions of the federal government. Not a single member opposite has yet made a speech during this debate. Yet I remember that during the last general election all those gentlemen in front of me all of a sudden became great upholders of provincial rights. Today, the same gentlemen are facing a problem affecting 300,000 taxpayers of the province of Quebec; it is up to them to solve the problem without the rest of the taxpayers of the country losing a single penny and without the federal government losing a penny since the province of Quebec in this way would still get less than the amount the federal government was ready to pay if the province had decided to sign the agreement.

Mr. Dupuis: You said all that in Verdun.

Mr. Balcer: Tonight, we press the government to take a decision to that effect; the matter is urgent because beginning April 1 the provincial tax will be deducted at the source from the salary of a large number of Quebec taxpayers. That is why I hope that the government and its supporters will avail themselves of this opportunity to break their silence in this connection, because we must not forget that the people of Quebec are all looking towards Ottawa and wondering whether the federal government will fulfil their wishes and treat the Quebec taxpayers on the same footing as other Canadians. Everyone is wondering whether Quebec taxpayers are to be penalized because the provincial government refuses to accept the terms of a federal-provincial agreement drafted by Ottawa and which does not please the people of Quebec who have their autonomy at heart.

Mr. Breton: Mr. Speaker, now that my hon. colleague from Three Rivers has concluded his speech, may I ask him two questions?

Mr. Balcer: With pleasure.