

Oral Questions

to 400 men collecting benefits at current rates of unemployment insurance. The money which will be collected from that iniquitous fuel compensation tax will be used up within a month. Would the Minister not reconsider now, before the Seaway opens, and before he comes down with his budget, declare that iniquitous tax redundant and abolish it?

Hon. Marc Lalonde (Minister of Finance): Madam Speaker, I am very pleased to receive a representation from the Hon. Member in this regard. I said to his colleague that I would study whatever representations may be made by the Minister of Transport, whatever representations he may have made. As far as the substance of the question is concerned, however, I would like to point out to the Hon. Member that this tax only brings the cost of fuel in line with the cost which the lakers have to pay for American fuel. Also, in effect, the Canadian lakers are operating under a substantial advantage as compared to the American lakers since their wage rates are in Canadian dollars and, right from the start, they have a 20 per cent advantage over American wage settlements. In terms of competition versus American lake companies, the decline in lake shipping has been the result of a general decline in the North American economy and the lack of trade, particularly with regard to iron ore, over the last year. Obviously these factors have nothing to do with any particular tax.

POSITION OF CANADIAN INDUSTRY

Mr. J. M. Forrestall (Dartmouth-Halifax East): Madam Speaker, my question is a little less general than that. We have already lost 2,000 to 3,000 jobs in that industry because the Seaway is too expensive for our American neighbours to the south to use. The moneys which are paid out alone in unemployment insurance are used up within a week in terms of the amount of money which is recovered. Drop your fuel tax and you might very well put another 1,000 Canadian seamen back to work and recoup the loss. The Government is not going to make any money out of it, in any event, but it is putting them at a competitive disadvantage.

Hon. Marc Lalonde (Minister of Finance): Madam Speaker, the Hon. Member will have to explain why eliminating the tax will convince lake shipowners to travel without any cargo.

* * *

INCOME TAX

FILING OF RETURNS BY SENIOR CITIZENS

Mr. W. C. Scott (Victoria-Haliburton): Madam Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of National Revenue. Senior citizens across the country are asking if they have to file income tax returns. Will the Minister please tell the House if the recipients of Old Age Security pensions, Guaranteed Income Supplement and Canada Pension Plan benefits must file an income tax return?

[Translation]

Hon. Pierre Bussières (Minister of National Revenue): Madam Speaker, all Canadian citizens who have an income must file an income tax return. Although in the case of Canadians who are sixty-five or over, deductions are much higher than for other workers, nevertheless, anyone who has an income, whatever the source, must report it and file an income tax return.

[English]

COMPLEXITY OF FORMS

Mr. W. C. Scott (Victoria-Haliburton): Madam Speaker, my supplementary question is directed to the same Minister. Many senior citizens have been penalized for not paying income tax quarterly. When will the Minister put out an income tax form which is understandable to our senior citizens, and mail it to all of those who are in receipt of old age pensions, the Guaranteed Income Supplement and Canada Pension Plan benefits? Please, Mr. Minister, send them something which they can understand and have knowledge of!

[Translation]

Hon. Pierre Bussières (Minister of National Revenue): Madam Speaker, I agree with the Hon. Member and many other Members of this House that there may be a problem in this respect for some senior citizens—first of all in connection with quarterly payments of income tax, that is, if their income is above the minimum amount, and second, the income tax form itself. It is a problem that must be given consideration, and I can assure the Hon. Member and other Members of the this House that I will be giving special attention to this point.

* * *

[English]

MEDICAL CARE

STATUS OF PROPOSED CANADA HEALTH ACT

Mr. Bill Blaikie (Winnipeg-Birds Hill): Madam Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of National Health and Welfare. The Minister will know that this month has been declared National Save Medicare Month by the Canadian Health Coalition. She will also know that many people are writing to their Members of Parliament concerning the Canada Health Act and their desire that any Act which might be forthcoming should reinforce, clarify, and strengthen the five basic principles of medicare.

● (1450)

Will the Minister bring the House up to date on the status of the Canada Health Act? Can we expect that she will soon be going back to the provincial Ministers of Health with a proposal regarding extra billing better than the one she went with the last time? Will she be tabling a proposal in the House of Commons? Will she be putting before the Canadian people something they can relate to other than the mystery document