

Excise and Sales Taxes

them—should not inflict taxes upon the junior governments knowing, as we all do in this house, the difficulties which the junior governments have in meeting the increased costs of municipal services, and particularly the increased costs of education.

We hear a great deal about the increased costs of education, Mr. Speaker, but may I say that educational costs in the past have been relatively low and our schools and our teaching staffs have been more or less starved financially, with the result that we have in the country many obsolete schools and many overburdened teachers. Indeed, there are shortages of teachers in many parts of Canada. After all, the future of our country depends, to a large extent—particularly in the times in which we live—on the ability of the individual to understand what is going on and to make his own appraisals of situations which may arise. That fact means that we must have a thoroughly competent educational system.

May I also say that in many of our municipalities health conditions are far from satisfactory. In the past, with their limited taxation powers, many municipalities, villages and even urban centres in this country have had a deplorable level of sanitation, a situation which reacts against the health of the people who reside in the towns and the villages of Canada. I think that one gesture we can make is the one outlined in the amendment this afternoon, namely the remission of the right to tax local property in the municipalities and in the provinces. I think also that the amendment might have been accompanied by the suggestion that equipment brought into the country from abroad, for use in the municipalities and so on, should be exempt from any import duties.

But this is only a gesture. We know perfectly well that the taxes on land and real property are today not only oppressive but are preventing the building of suitable homes. I know of young people who have looked around this city, for example, and have chosen what they consider to be a location that would be fairly acceptable to them but who, when they asked what the taxes would be, have decided that they could not afford to carry the costs of building and to look forward to paying not only the taxes that now exist but also the local improvement taxes that would be placed on that property when paving and sewerage are given to the property.

An hon. Member: And water.

Mr. Coldwell: Usually they have water facilities.

[Mr. Coldwell.]

I therefore want to support this amendment, Mr. Speaker. I not only support it on my own behalf but I know I am supporting it on behalf of the C.C.F. party in this house. We have made this suggestion with others. I am not taking credit for suggesting this action. We have suggested it with others in this house from time to time, and I am confident that in all parts of the house hon. members have a great deal of sympathy for the suggestion that has been made. I hope that hon. members who have that sympathy, wherever they may sit, will rise in their places and by their vote this afternoon will show that they support the proposal.

Mr. J. H. Blackmore (Lethbridge): Mr. Speaker, members of the Social Credit group will support this motion. I think it is fitting to draw attention to the fact that the whole nation is suffering at the present time because of an extensive increase in costs which has been brought on by the very policies of the government at present in power.

The rise in prices began in 1946 with the \$5 increase in the price of steel, and the consequent strike of the steel workers for an increase in their wages. The federal government permitted that increase in steel prices and consequently had to assume responsibility for all the increases which have resulted from the increase in the price of steel. While the nation now is suffering from the high costs which are resulting from those very policies, to levy a tax on machinery and other materials required by the individual municipalities—which will make them pay not only the increase in price but a tax on it—is something which I think constitutes an extreme of injustice. It must be borne in mind also that not only have we had an excessive increase in prices, in the cost of living, in the cost of housing, in the cost of rent, as well as taxation on the individual members, but we have also excessive taxation by the federal government.

Mr. Speaker: Order. Probably I should draw to the attention of the house the fact this motion deals with taxation on municipal taxpayers and suggests:

That immediate consideration should be given to the introduction of legislation which will provide for the exemption of all municipal councils and school boards from the payment of excise taxes . . .

I think hon. members should direct their remarks to that feature of the amendment.

Mr. Blackmore: I agree with that entirely, Mr. Speaker, and if you had waited another minute you would have found me right on that particular subject.