

Proceedings on Adjournment Motion

mention in it of raising the income tax exemption levels. This was the case in spite of the fact that the cost of living in May of this year had risen 4.7 per cent over the cost of living in May of 1968. The cost of food was up by 4.2 per cent; the cost of housing by 5.3 per cent, the cost of transportation by 5.2 per cent and the cost of living is still going up.

I wonder whether the minister is deluged by letters of the kind I get? An example is this one from a woman in Alberta who says:

If only people like our Mr. Trudeau could experience the frustration of being put through the degradation of never having enough money to go around, I am certain some drastic changes would be made. I'd like to cover the rising food costs also, and what they mean to us. At the present time we cannot afford to have meat on the table once a day. Try and explain that to a grade 2 child who is being taught the importance of Canada's food rules in school.

I would like to explain that my husband is a graduate of the University of Alberta in Edmonton. He worked steadily for 8 years before entering university, and through the years he held a part time job as well as working all summer. He is presently working Saturdays, hours which should be devoted to classroom preparation as he is a high school teacher. During summer vacations he will also have to find a job instead of going to summer school as he had planned.

These are people who would be helped by raising income tax exemption levels—they and their three small children. So would some of the elderly people whose incomes are just enough to keep life in their bodies, but who are continually obliged to find survival in ways which are dubious and disgusting to them as well as to every sensitive person who hears about them.

This government must surely be compelled to make a determined effort to shut out the thought of their misery. Fortunately for cabinet ministers, they do not have to think about it, except once in a while, as when those elderly people told them about old age pensioners being obliged to eke out their food by eating dog and cat food. Undoubtedly, ministers made sympathetic noises in reply, but it is action that counts. The finance minister's budget was a cool and modern edition of Marie Antoinette's famous reply, which paraphrased, would be: If they haven't meat, let them eat cat.

I realize that my question of nearly two months ago referred to the minister's current budget. He will soon be hard at work doing the necessary thinking in preparation for his next budget. At this time I urge him to consider carefully the need for raising income tax exemption levels to at least \$2,000 for single persons and \$4,000 for married couples.

[Mrs. MacInnis.]

In this way, persons below these levels should not have to pay any income tax whatsoever. Income taxes are essential to carry on the public services of this country, but they should be levied according to ability to pay. Instead of scraping the last few cents from the pockets of young families and elderly pensioners, we should provide them with enough income to lead a modern and decent life, secure in their dignity as human beings. At the same time we should place the tax burden on the shoulders of those who have incomes, in the measure of their ability to pay. It is not what you pay in taxes that counts, it is what you have left to live on.

I do hope that the next time the Minister of Finance will be guided in preparing his budget by the principle of taxation according to ability to pay. Let him raise the exemption levels from the present \$1,000 for single persons and \$2,000 for married couples to at least \$2,000 for single persons and \$4,000 for married couples.

Mr. H. E. Gray (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, proposals of the type just made by the hon. lady have already been made in this house by many hon. members, including members on this side who support the government. As the hon. lady must know, the government is completing work on a comprehensive program of tax reform, and it is expected that this will be made public in the not too distant future in the form of a white paper. One would think that the matter of exemptions would be one of a number of matters under active consideration in the course of the preparation of this program of tax reform.

● (10:20 p.m.)

As the hon. lady knows under our British and Canadian parliamentary tradition matters involving possible changes of taxes are considered to be secret and confidential until formally announced in the house by the government in the course of a budget presentation or through a white paper. May I conclude, Mr. Speaker, by again pointing to the interest and concern in this question on the part of many hon. members, including those on the government side of the house and again giving the assurance that this matter is one of those under consideration at the present time.

FISHERIES—DOGFISH—DISCUSSIONS BETWEEN
CANADIAN AND JAPANESE OFFICIALS

Mr. Ray Perrault (Burnaby-Seymour): Mr. Speaker, I understand that meetings are