

ESTATE TAX ACT

INFORMATION TO GOVERNMENT SUPPORTERS
RESPECTING LEGISLATION

Mr. Craig Stewart (Marquette): Mr. Speaker, I should like to direct my question to the Minister of Finance. Has the minister provided confidential information concerning changes in proposed estate tax laws to government members of this house for transmission to their friends?

Mr. Speaker: Need I suggest to the hon. member that the question as asked is either a charge or an accusation, and therefore cannot be accepted, phrased in that way.

DISCLOSURES BY HON. MEMBER FOR PORTAGE
AND HON. MEMBER FOR PROVENCHER
RESPECTING LEGISLATION

Hon. Marcel Lambert (Edmonton West): Mr. Speaker, I should like to ask the Minister of Finance whether he can advise the house as to any confidential information which may have been given to any member of this house regarding the proposed estate tax legislation?

Hon. E. J. Benson (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, the resolution and a full explanation of it was given to the whole house and to the country. Since the resolution was introduced in the house, I have had discussions with members of my own caucus and members of the opposition in respect of their ideas about what should happen to estate tax law. Indeed, the Leader of the Opposition has said I should withdraw the legislation entirely and not benefit the women of the country. Apparently he is against women.

Mr. Lambert (Edmonton West): Mr. Speaker, my question simply was, has any confidential information been given to any members of the house in respect of the estate tax proposals or changes?

Mr. Benson: I do not really know what my friend means by "confidential information", but—

An hon. Member: Oh, yes you do.

Mr. A. D. Hales (Wellington South): Mr. Speaker, among the great amount of mail the Minister of Finance has received concerning changes to the estate tax laws did he receive a petition from the Liberal association of the Wellington riding asking him to withdraw it?

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. I suggest to the hon. member that this type of question cannot be asked at this time. This would open the door to many similar questions.

Inquiries of the Ministry

Right Hon. J. G. Diefenbaker (Prince Albert): Mr. Speaker, would it not be easier for the minister to table all the letters of criticism that he has received, although not here in the house because they would fill this chamber?

Mr. Benson: I would be glad to table the compliments I have received, and they are very numerous.

Mr. Bell: You will get more letters when the people hear about that.

Mr. Lambert (Edmonton West): Mr. Speaker, would the minister advise the house whether he authorized the hon. member for Portage and the hon. member for Provencher to disclose that he was going to make certain changes and would bow to some of the opposition to the bill?

Mr. Benson: No, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Lambert (Edmonton West): Is the minister then saying that the disclosures made by those hon. members were incorrect?

Mr. Benson: I have not seen them.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Lincoln M. Alexander (Hamilton West): Mr. Speaker, in view of the increasing opposition to the proposed change in respect of estate taxes, of which I am sure the minister is aware, can he now state that he is prepared to change this measure in order to make it more realistic for Canadians who want to work and save in the future?

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The question is argumentative. I suggest to the hon. member that this type of question should be asked during the course of his speech when we are considering the legislation.

Mr. Alexander: May I rephrase my question, Mr. Speaker? In view of the many representations which have been made to the minister through letters, and statements this afternoon, can he now state that he is prepared to change the estate tax bill?

Mr. Benson: The legislation will be introduced tomorrow and my hon. friend will see exactly what is in the bill then.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. May I remind the house that other members would like to ask questions. There have been quite a number of supplementary questions on this subject, but I will allow another by the hon. member for Edmonton West.