

Excise

The waters of Kootenay Lake, the waters of Arrow Lake and many of the major bodies of water in British Columbia, the Yukon and the Northwest Territories are waters that see the tragedy of drowning every year. These drownings are very frequently associated with under powered boats, or boats of inadequate dimension.

We also notice that similar boats and boats of a larger dimension, larger than 20 feet, are being used by the logging industry to transfer loggers from one point to another across major bodies of water. Are we to witness similar tragedies and similar drownings because of the imposition of a 10 per cent tax? I can recall a tragedy on Kootenay Lake a few years ago just north of Creston, where a company boat overturned with the loss of several lives. That is one consideration.

The other consideration which I think the minister should take into account is that there are many average working men and women who have looked forward for some time to the opportunity of owning their own small pleasure boats. I am not talking about luxury yachts. I am talking about the average fellow who lives in my riding who wants a pleasure boat to entertain his wife and his children, and who wants to go water skiing. I cannot imagine anything more incongruous than a boat with a 20 horsepower motor lifting the Minister of Agriculture out of the waters of Kootenay Lake. It is a virtual impossibility!

Mr. Turner (Ottawa-Carleton): You are talking about 150 horsepower.

Mr. Brisco: I did not want to mention the horsepower. I am glad the minister did. In any event these people are now faced with the sudden imposition of a tax which is going to increase the purchase price of that boat by \$500 or \$600, and put it out of their reach. This is perhaps their sole source of pleasure in the summer months.

If the purpose of the tax was precisely to attack luxuries, then I would say it was an excellent idea. If the purpose of the tax is to save energy, then let me give you the figures for Kootenay Lake to demonstrate how shallow is the argument. In fact eight hour's cruising on Kootenay Lake with a 65 horsepower motor at trolling speed will consume five gallons of gas at the maximum. Kootenay Lake is a very popular body of water. What was the total gasoline consumption for Kootenay Lake in 1974, if we are interested in conserving energy? All those boats, all that fuel, consumed 32,000 gallons.

Mr. Reynolds: Three hours in a 747.

Mr. Brisco: That is a valid point. The other thing of concern to me is that if I were in a position to afford a small pleasure boat, I could purchase one today in my riding brought in from the United States for considerably less than one made right here in Canada by, for example, Starcraft, or some other manufacturer. In effect what we are doing is creating a penalty for being Canadian and buying Canadian, and I rather resent that.

In 1974 in my riding a 16 foot Starcraft with a 65 horsepower motor cost \$3,650. That same unit today costs \$5,500. The basic price of the hull has gone up from \$1,350 to \$2,227. That is pretty darned rough. I would think that

[Mr. Brisco.]

there are many independent loggers on Kootenay Lake who must move back and forth across that lake and who must haul their fuel, their oil, their chainsaws and various logging equipment by boat, which is their only means of access to logging areas on Kootenay Lake. These loggers are going to suffer as a result of this tax. Certainly the boating industry in Canada is going to suffer.

The hon. member for Esquimalt-Saanich asked why we have a small craft harbours program. He also asked why any member of parliament should take the trouble of advising communities bordering on a large body of water within his riding that there is an excellent federal program available, and that if application is made it may be considered favourably and a small craft harbour established. That is an excellent scheme. I do not question the need, but why bother making the effort if, in turn, we are going to reduce the boating industry?

This brings me to another point because we are talking about the conservation of energy, and we are talking about the imposition of the tax, but we are not taxing the boats that are already on the water. There are thousands of them across Canada. The only boats that we are taxing are the boats that are waiting in the shipyards to be sold to the Canadian consumers. They are the ones that we seem to be concerned about in connection with the conservation of energy.

I heard a remark earlier to the effect that if we are really concerned about energy there should be a gradual increase in the cost of petroleum products. I think that that is a valid suggestion. I think it is one that many Canadian consumers could probably accept, but not when they see that the fellow next door last year bought a small pleasurecraft to go fishing, to entertain his family and to go water skiing, which is not subject to an energy tax per se, whereas the same boat today is taxed. With the imposition of this tax the consumer who has saved \$3,500 is still unable to purchase because of the 10 per cent tax. Really, it is just not fair. That is the thing we have to consider.

• (2150)

I should also like to thank the minister most sincerely for his reconsideration of another section of clause 20 that we have dealt with tonight, with reference to the removal of the tax on certain medical equipment, supplies for diabetics, for people who require heart monitoring devices, and others similarly incapacitated. I am sure they appreciate this particular clause.

I should also like to thank the minister for reviewing the terms by which an abatement would be given to municipalities for sewage systems, water drainage systems and the like. The minister has informed us that this will apply to regional districts, such as we have in British Columbia, to unorganized areas and to water boards. I think he has established his credibility in regard to acceptance of suggestions from the opposition. I hope he will also establish his credibility with reference to boats and to aircraft.

I am sure the minister is more aware than I of the facts and figures pertaining to the aircraft industry and aircraft fuel consumption. I am sure he knows that an aircraft can fly from Castlegar to Penticton for one-third less fuel, and one-tenth less oil consumption than an automobile.