

Excise Tax

Minister. The Alberta gas co-ops sent 126 oil and gas well service industry representatives to Ottawa to speak in very clear terms of severe cutbacks, lay-offs, massive budgetary reductions and idle drilling rigs, and I want to know why those distinguished industry representatives cannot be heard here. Let me quote, Mr. Speaker, just one paragraph from their brief. It is well worth hearing again. They said:

On behalf of our members, and for the benefit of all Canadians who are, or will, use natural gas or natural gas by-products as a source of energy, we protest the imposition of the recently announced natural gas excise tax.

This excise tax will have particularly harsh effects on those with low or fixed incomes, unskilled wage earners, elderly pensioners, and farmers who have only limited opportunity to recover this additional cost.

Now, Mr. Speaker, are the Alberta gas co-ops not worth listening to? Is the Alberta Chamber of Commerce, which submitted a brief along the same lines, not worth hearing? These are the voices of responsible, moderate and productive groups in our country who want to move Canada into an era of high production, one of which we are capable and which must be achieved if we are to have energy self-sufficiency before the year 2000. I have already lost hope that we will have it by 1990. These people ask, and properly so, why is it that our resources are to be taxed when others, such as gold, uranium and hydroelectric power found in other provinces, are not? That is a question I would invite some member of the government to stand up tonight and answer. I would like to know why the government is so determined to nationalize the petroleum industry, why we see this same kind of philosophy in its attempted takeover of the CDC, a philosophy which we see espoused in so many of the government's policies.

We in Alberta, Mr. Speaker, want to participate fully in the continued development of our country. I say to you that the Prime Minister, who is giving some attention these days to North-South problems, is not going to achieve gains in the North-South if he is unable to solve some of the east-west tensions in our own country. That is something which needs the attention of our government in a much larger way, taking into account the responsible voices who are pleading with the government to get on with the job of developing our country and allow each region to participate fully so that we can proceed together in a world that needs our productive ability. It is not right that bankruptcies are up 300 per cent in one year in Alberta, a province that is supposed to have one of the most dynamic economies in our country. The deleterious effects of the cutback in oil production in Alberta are being felt in the secondary industrial aspects of our society.

I say to you, Mr. Speaker, that the combination of constitutional, energy and economic policies carried on by this government, which we see continued tonight in the government's determination to push Bill C-57, are destructive and are going to destroy our country. I do not want to be around in a few years' time when my children come to me and say: "Where were you when it was clearly apparent what was happening to our country, where was your voice?" I tell you, Mr. Speaker, that here I am, one of many people in this House representing millions of people who are fed up with the way in which our country is being mismanaged. This government must really be

a lover of animals because I am telling you, it is sending our country to the dogs tonight.

Mr. J. R. Ellis (Prince Edward-Hastings): Mr. Speaker, I am going to be reasonably brief in my remarks this evening. First of all, I want to do as my colleague, the hon. member for Edmonton South (Mr. Roche) did and direct a few words at the previous speaker, the hon. member for Hamilton Mountain (Mr. Deans) who had the audacity, the bravery, the courage to take on the banks from the very, very safe position of being unable to do a confounded thing about it. He knows very well that in doing that, by supporting his friends across the way as that party did a year or so ago, he will never be able to do anything about it. I want to go on record as well as having said to my friends on the left that they had an opportunity to put into place a government that would have taken action on all of our economic problems and they blew it.

An hon. Member: You too defended Bouey.

Mr. Ellis: And my guess is that they will continue to blow it.

Tonight I want to deal with one very small segment of this bill, that is motion No. 9 in the name of the hon. member for Edmonton West (Mr. Lambert), and I thank him for putting it on the Order Paper. He and I had some discussions on this, and while I could not possibly attend the various meetings in committee—and I make no bones about the fact that I do not get very involved in tax bills—they bother me more than just a little bit. Nonetheless, this particular item is one in which I am particularly interested. It has to do with the removal of the provision for commercial air service operators to deduct the tax on aviation gasoline used in flight training. This is an example, Mr. Speaker, of the government, as it has done in the past, taking a pot-shot at a very small segment of the economy, one with very little ability to fight back because it is not as big as the airlines, the banks or many other segments of the economy. In fact, it is made up of some very fine people who are very concerned about that segment of the economy.

The commercial air service operators who provide flight training are very concerned that the importance of this training is being lost sight of, as evidenced by these tax measures. In the mini-budget of April 21 last year, the sales tax exemption for commercial aircraft was amended to exclude aircraft used in flight training. In the same budget it was confirmed that refunds of the excise tax on aviation gasoline, which was imposed in December, 1978 ostensibly for non-commercial users, would not be available for flight training activity.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I want to take a moment and put on the record a picture of one of these small fixed-base operators. The one I will use as an example is a man named Jim Marker. Jim Marker has been involved in the education of students of flying in the Belleville area. In fact, he has been involved in all sorts of flying in the Belleville area for these many years. He is a very dedicated man. I doubt very much if he has ever taken a cent out of the business which he has supported so loyally for these past two decades. As a matter of fact, I know he has put money into the business on a regular basis. In fact, his position