

Excise Tax Act

I think what we should do now is to have a general election.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Some hon. Members: Resign.

An hon. Member: What about your leader?

Mr. Coates: Don't you worry about our leader; the one we have right now is much better than yours.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Coates: We can beat you six days in the week and twice on Sunday. I am very happy to hang on with what we have in the way of a leader. As a matter of fact, he is such a material improvement on everyone else we have in the House of Commons now that I just wish this government would be so kind as to test public opinion again, and then we would see a government with policies and programs that would produce a forward-looking economy in which everyone would have confidence, a nation in which everyone would be willing to work and where jobs would be available for them.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Coates: Let us look at some of the policies that could be produced and that would be of material benefit in providing employment for the people. Consider, for example, the Fundy tidal power. This is the kind of project in which the government could be involved and which would be of benefit to the nation as a whole. It could produce tremendous amounts of energy, which we so badly need, and it would give us built-in protection against the commitments we have for oil and gas. There would be no need for the ten cents a gallon excise tax on gas which is imposed by the government in the hope that it will convince someone to conserve energy by paying more for it.

We must have energy, there is no other alternative, but we have a national asset in the Fundy tidal power that could be of value to everyone in this nation. What does the government say to it? We have carried out two studies, so we will spend \$3 million more to carry out another study which will take two or three more years, and by that time the cost of construction will have gone up by another 25 per cent. Then the government will come back and say they cannot carry out this project because the construction costs are excessive and because of the inroads of inflation.

That is just one project that could be put into effect. There are dozens of other projects of that kind that could be of benefit to the nation, that could provide employment today and tomorrow and that would guarantee a future for the people living in our area who are looking for jobs. Jobs in our area are disappearing because of policies such as this excise tax on gasoline which has been put into effect now, a policy which is destroying and eroding the jobs which people in our area have at present.

Mr. Muir: This government only thinks about central Canada. That is all they have on their minds.

[Mr. Coates.]

Mr. Coates: This government did not even think much about central Canada when it brought down this budget, because the guy they are hitting hardest is the guy who lives in suburbia and who is trying to get to his job which is 15 or 20 miles away, a distance which he has to travel by car because this government will not put in any kind of rapid transit system to get him to work. Until the government comes forward with some kind of policy to provide a real alternative to the use of motor cars, we will be faced with the fact that the Canadian people will burn more gasoline than is required or necessary because we do not have the kind of systems that are available in other parts of the world.

That is only one example of why we in the opposition believe the proposition put forward by the minister should have a six months' hoist. As a matter of fact, it should be hoisted and thrown over the moon—

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Coates: —because that is the only place where it might be of some value.

An hon. Member: Or thrown into the Prime Minister's swimming pool.

Mr. Coates: Swimming pools are wonderful things. I understand the one the Prime Minister has his heated, so he will use a little extra energy. These luxuries have been provided by unknown beneficiaries whom the people of Canada would like to know, but the Prime Minister refuses to give this information. He will have an Olympic-sized pool in his back yard, but there are people who do not have enough money to put enough food in their pantries to keep them going.

● (1720)

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Morin): Order, please. I would like to remind the hon. gentleman that we are discussing excise tax.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Coates: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I am talking about the inroads of inflation upon the economy of this nation, and that is what the minister's ten cent tax on gasoline is supposed to be all about. We are suggesting that there are other ways of conserving energy rather than putting all the problems on the backs of the workingmen and the poor people of this nation.

There is much scope with this kind of tax. There are a thousand and one ways the minister could have approached it, rather than levying this kind of tax and saying that he will grant rebates to many people who will be at the mercy of the bureaucrats again. Rather than any diminution in the size of the public service, there surely will be more red tape and more people getting jobs to bother Canadians, forcing them to fill out more forms to claim the money the government should not have had in the first place. While the government has the money, it will be making money, but there will be no interest paid on the rebate, that is for sure. The taxpayers will be lucky to get it back. Lord only knows how long they will have to wait, but if they do enough praying the minister may tell