

Income Tax

by paragraph 12(1)(u) to be included in computing his or his spouse's income for the year or a subsequent year.

I see one of the Hon. Members from Montreal looking puzzled, asking what I am saying.

Mr. Tousignant: I am listening.

Mr. McDermid: What did it say? That was Mr. MacInnis' and our point exactly. I will give him the translation, for his benefit as well as mine. It means that if you receive a home insulation or energy conservation grant you have to include it in income. Unless your spouse has higher income, then he or she has to report it. That is all that it says.

Would it not be so much simpler for the poor taxpayer and the poor Member of Parliament who has to try to wade through this monster if it were put into that kind of language? When the Government begins to play with the tax law, I challenge it to take the tax law that it has now and put it into some semblance of order so that the individual at home who has to fill out the tax form can understand what he or she is doing. It is becoming increasingly complicated for Canadians to pay tax.

While we are discussing the tax Bill, I would also like to comment on the Department of Revenue. I have with me a file from a case that involves a reassessment of an individual who started a full time horse-breeding operation. The Ministry of Revenue forced him into bankruptcy, and I mean forced into bankruptcy. They have probably the most effective collection agency in the world.

I am not sure of the experience of other Hon. Members, but for some reason there has been an inordinate amount of bullying by the Ministry of Revenue in the last year. There has also been an inordinate number of rebates for which my office has taken considerable time in attempting to locate. Most of them, quite coincidentally, are over \$1,000. It makes one wonder if they are not holding back those funds as long as possible because the Government is shy of cash over there. Obviously, it is shy of cash because we will be debating shortly its request to borrow \$5 billion. It has already borrowed approximately \$31 billion in the last 20 months. And we will be debating about another \$5 billion.

I want to conclude my brief remarks by saying that there are about 12 sections in Bill C-139 that we feel are wrong and on which I will be concentrating once the Bill goes through committee. Those sections need correction before the Bill is passed.

The Government has caused uncertainty about the economy of this country to every Canadian, including airline employees and even those with life insurance policies. The three budgets have affected absolutely everyone in the country in a negative way. They have caused a great deal of uncertainty. Once the Bill goes to committee, there are a number of items which we think should be withdrawn, and we ask the Government to give careful consideration to those changes.

Hon. Alvin Hamilton (Qu'Appelle-Moose Mountain): Mr. Speaker, anyone who has been listening to this debate on

income tax amendments will have detected a theme which is quite significant. The Hon. Member for Edmonton West (Mr. Lambert), who was the first speaker on this side of the House on the amendment, pointed out that the cause of all the trouble was that the philosophy of those who enforce the Income Tax Act was wrong. That philosophy is that the money belongs to the tax collector and not to the individual who earned it. This philosophy, that the individual has to prove his right to his own money, is the cause of the problem. This is true whether it applies to businessmen, farmers or other individuals.

We heard the same theme from the Hon. Member for Moose Jaw (Mr. Neil). Hardworking people simply do not understand that philosophy.

After the Benson reforms came in nearly a decade ago, schools were opened for accountants all across the country to study them. Every accountant who attended those schools has confessed to me that he is still unable to understand the system even after attending such a school. Yet they are the people from whom we have to seek help to fill out a simple income tax statement. The point originally made by the Hon. Member for Edmonton West is still true.

Years ago, newspapermen used to sit in the gallery and listen to the debates. One journalist in particular made a living as a humourist as a sideline. His humour took the form of reading the instructions in the telephone book on how to operate the telephone. It was the most humorous dialogue on a serious matter that one would want to hear. Eventually, Bell Telephone amended the directions to make them more understandable.

That is the advice that we are giving the Government. This has gone beyond a joke. We have heard two examples in the House today from Members who read sections of the Income Tax Act. The humour is there. Even a self-confessed school-teacher cannot understand it. Even the son of a Minister cannot understand it.

My point is obvious. The remarks that were made by the accountant, as mentioned by the Hon. Member for Brampton-Georgetown (Mr. McDermid), were that no more changes should be made. His conclusion on the whole matter was, "Please do not make any more changes or amendments until we learn to understand what has already been done". However, his second proposal, which was not referred to by the Hon. Member for Brampton-Georgetown, is that what we must do during the next two years is to have someone rewrite the Income Tax Act in English.

● (1730)

Some Hon. Members: Right on.

Mr. Hamilton (Qu'Appelle-Moose Mountain): Bell Telephone manages to do it, the insurance companies now produce policies in English, and rather than being a subject of humour, let the matter be handled on the assumption that the ordinary person should be able to understand what he is being asked to fill out.