

Excise Tax Act

well as by the members of the Social Credit party. They wanted to cling to the government and they were afraid of an election. They failed to do their duty. They preferred to act in their own interest rather than in the public interest.

Mr. Lucien Plourde (Quebec West): Mr. Speaker, when we see the hon. member for Joliette-L'Assomption-Montcalm (Mr. Pigeon) and St. Hyacinthe-Bagot (Mr. Ricard), blame us for voting against this tax today, we wonder what they are doing. Are they afraid to go to the country? As for ourselves we are not afraid.

Mr. Pigeon: We want an election right away.

Mr. Plourde: Why then, Mr. Speaker, do they throw insults at us of the Social Credit party?

Mr. Speaker, on my own behalf and on behalf of my constituents, I object to this tax, because my constituency is perhaps the one where we find the largest slum districts and where it would be high time to restore old houses, with the centennial four years away. We now are faced with a tax which will slow down construction of new houses and slum clearance.

As for the unemployed, at the very beginning of this session, the Liberals stated that their main problem was to remedy unemployment. Well, I believe that this tax will increase the unemployment rate.

Therefore, Mr. Speaker, we are going to vote for the amendment moved by the right hon. Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Diefenbaker), because we are against this 11 per cent tax.

However, in all that, once again, we see only a petty political game in these dying hours of the session, whatever the hon. member for Joliette-L'Assomption-Montcalm may have to say to the contrary.

Mr. Pigeon: Mr. Speaker, we want to go to the country. Let this government resign.

(Text):

Mr. Speaker: Is the house ready for the question?

Hon. Mitchell Sharp (Minister of Trade and Commerce): Mr. Speaker, before you put the question to the house I should like to say a few words in reply to some of the observations made this afternoon by hon. gentlemen opposite. I do not intend to prolong the discussion. What we have heard for the most part has been a repetition of the arguments made during the second reading and committee

[Mr. Pigeon.]

stages and also at the resolution stage. My colleague, the Minister of Finance (Mr. Gordon), has dealt with these arguments at great length. This is not the first time we have heard them and they have not been changed in substance from the time they were first made.

I would remind the house about the problem faced by the nation when this government took office. Sometimes it seems to me, listening to hon. gentlemen opposite and in particular listening to those who support the Progressive Conservative party, they would have one believe that when this government took office the finances of this country—this country—were in good shape.

Mr. Knowles: That is a Freudian slip.

Mr. Sharp: I need hardly assure you, Mr. Speaker, that this was not so. The financial affairs of Canada when we took office were well known throughout the world to be in a mess. The problems with which we had to deal when we took over were not very pleasant. We had to find a means of meeting the financial conditions in this country and trying to restore order in our finances. It was necessary for this government to take some unpopular measures. I make no apologies whatever for taking unpopular measures.

As I listened to hon. members speaking I noticed that many of them were saying they would vote against this measure, not because it is not necessary but because it is unpopular. I say to hon. gentlemen opposite that no taxes are popular. If they want to vote against this tax for that reason, they ought to vote against all taxes. This tax is not the sort of tax that anyone would want to impose. This is a tax that had to be imposed because of the necessity for finding a large amount of revenue. As the Minister of Finance (Mr. Gordon) has said on many occasions in this house, no one from the other side has suggested where the government was going to get more revenue.

Mr. Gregoire: Mr. Speaker, I question that because we have indicated where they could get additional revenue.

Mr. Sharp: Well, Mr. Speaker, perhaps I shall be pardoned on this occasion for not getting into a discussion of Social Credit theory. A discussion of this subject could take the house a long way into the small hours of the morning, and I am sure that my hon. friend and I would have a very interesting discussion but it would not move the business of this house forward.

I have heard many of these hon. gentlemen opposite talk about the dire effects of this tax. Now, Mr. Speaker, being a member of this government, I have looked into this