

Excise Tax

it exceeds the one that we already have before us. Consequently, would the hon. minister accept the suggestion made by the hon. member for Nepean-Carleton to the effect that he could perhaps give him an idea of what his new text contains so that he can ascertain whether it is really necessary to have unanimous consent to table new amendments?

[English]

Mr. Lambert: Madam Speaker, I am not suggesting—

Madam Speaker: I am sorry, but I think we have found a solution to the problem. The minister will give hon. members some idea of the wording, and then they can determine among themselves whether the proposal should be accepted.

[Translation]

Mr. Bussi eres: Madam Speaker, am I to understand that, if I have unanimous consent after the documents are examined, I could proceed as I have requested, at any time later today?

Madam Speaker: It is my understanding that as soon as hon. members have read the text, the hon. minister can ask for unanimous consent.

[English]

Mr. Don Blenkarn (Mississauga South) moved:

Motion No. 1

That Bill C-57, to amend the Excise Tax Act and the Excise Act and to provide for a revenue tax in respect of petroleum and gas, be amended in Clause 1 by striking out lines 9 to 13 at page 2.

Mr. Knowles: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. Since Your Honour indicated that we will be grouping motions Nos. 1 and 3 for debate, should not motion No. 3 also be put now?

Madam Speaker: Yes, the hon. member is correct.

Mr. Don Blenkarn (Mississauga South) moved:

Motion No. 3

That Bill C-57, to amend the Excise Tax Act and the Excise Act and to provide for a revenue tax in respect of petroleum and gas, be amended in Clause 1 by striking out lines 26 to 34 at page 2 and lines 1 to 6 at page 3.

Hon. Marcel Lambert (Edmonton West): Madam Speaker, I hope we can carry on today following discussions with the hon. minister and my colleagues in the New Democratic Party. There was a half day of debate at second reading, a large number of days were spent hearing witnesses from the public at large, and there was discussion in committee. Now that we have reached this particular stage on the first set of motions, perhaps we might allow a rather wide-ranging debate on all aspects of the bill. This would certainly help clean up the passage of the bill. I think the minister should recognize that particular fact. Otherwise there will be a long, long hot summer with this particular bill, because every aspect of it will be repeated at each stage of debate.

The minister will remember that the House leader of the opposition, the minister, myself and our colleagues in the New Democratic Party agreed that there should be a short one-day

debate in order to expedite the passage of the bill to committee to hear witnesses. Now, it is only fair that the minister agree at this point to let other hon. members make what, in effect, will be second reading debate speeches at this stage when we are considering motions Nos. 1 and 3 standing in the name of the hon. member for Mississauga South (Mr. Blenkarn).

If the hon. minister wants another reason why that should happen, it is that we are dealing with clause 1 of the bill. When we are dealing with amendments at report stage, particularly to clause 1 which incidentally is a definition clause, surely to goodness we can expect a wide-ranging debate. This is the practice of the House. To simply say that we will be limited to the terms of these amendments would be a denial of the practices of the House. I think it would not do anything constructive in terms of the continuity and effectiveness of this particular debate. Therefore, I propose to review what has happened leading up to this particular point.

I should like to refer to the number of witnesses in committee. It was interesting to see the wide spectrum of the source of these witnesses. There were representatives from the city of Medicine Hat, the Hobbema Four Band Council—

[Translation]

—regional and metropolitan weeklies, select newspapers from Quebec, the Qu eb ecor Inc. group, the South Shore weeklies and Michael Publishing Inc—

[English]

—and suburban newspapers. Then there was the Canadian Association of Provincial Liquor Commissioners, the Association of Canadian Distillers, the Canadian Construction Association, the Independent Petroleum Association of Canada, the Retail Council of Canada, the Canadian Petroleum Association, the Canadian Organization of Small Business, the Federation of Alberta Gas Co-Ops Ltd., the Canadian Wine Institute, Dome Petroleum Limited, and the Canadian Federation of Independent Business. If my memory serves me correctly, there may have been some others, but I do not have the exact textual indication of who they were.

This bill is an omnibus bill. Although it deals with the excise tax, it ranges far and wide on the commodities it touches. Not only does it do that but, even more so, I suggest it creates wide departures from the normal course of the calculation of the excise tax and, shall I say, its impact.

● (1550)

In the past the excise tax has always been known as the "manufacturers' sales tax". It was imposed upon the price at which a manufacturer was selling his commodity. But the legislation before us does not do that. We will now be recognizing a switch which had been hinted at and advocated by the Porter commission report to shift the incidence of the excise tax away from the manufacturer to the wholesaler, bringing it closer to the ultimate consumer and, of course, yielding that much more money to the Crown since there has been no change in the rate of tax. There is no doubt in my mind that in