

Statements by Ministers

Minister's White Paper on tax reform. so little has been changed since that time that I might as well pull out the speech that I gave on June 18 and deliver it again.

We are left with a tax system, Mr. Speaker, which is as unfair as the reforms that the Minister put forward back in June of this year. We are left with a tax system in which wealthy Canadians with incomes of over \$100,000 will be big winners, and in which poor Canadians and Canadians with average incomes will be considerably worse off than they were back in 1984 before the Conservative Government came to power. We are left with a system where the essential unfairness of the tax system has not been changed by the Minister of Finance (Mr. Wilson).

• (1730)

The Minister says that he is quite happy and that the Government is quite happy to go to the people with tax reform as one of the major planks in the Conservative platform. If the Minister thinks the bank shareholders are the only voters, then so be it. I am sure that they will give the Minister of Finance the vote of confidence which they feel he richly deserves.

As far as average Canadians are concerned, that is not the case. The Minister had a choice. He could have opted in favour of average Canadians or he could have opted in favour of the banks. He has opted in favour of banks and financial institutions and against average Canadians. I am quite happy to go to the people and talk about tax reform and about real fairness, a fairness which I am afraid we do not see in the proposals from the Minister of Finance.

[Translation]

Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Finance had a choice to make, but what he gave us is a system which remains unfair to ordinary Canadians. Canadians were expecting justice, but with this so-called tax reform advocated by the Minister of Finance the average family will pay \$1,000 more than in 1984 as a result of the tax reform just unveiled by the Minister of Finance, and once he is through making the changes announced today in the ways and means motion.

People living below poverty level will continue to pay taxes. Sixty thousand profitable corporations will still be able to pay no income tax at all under the fiscal reform introduced by the Minister. And thanks to the partial deindexation, the benefits, if any, for the average Canadian family will have completely disappeared within three years.

[English]

Over the past six months the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs has worked particularly hard on the question of tax reform. We responded, albeit with some reticence, to the Minister's timetable. We accepted that the Minister's delay until June 18 in introducing his tax reform would not prevent us from offering our comments. Just over a month ago, after a cross-country tour, after receiving more than 600 briefs and after hearing from some 200 witnesses, we presented a report with 81 recommendations which were based

on sober second thought and on a great deal of reflection on the proposals made by the Minister of Finance.

I regret to say that the Minister has totally ignored most of those recommendations. In fact, according to my count, only 12 of the 81 recommendations made by the committee have been acted upon by the Minister. The rest have either been ignored, rejected, or put aside for further study. If the Minister and the Conservative Government really believe in parliamentary reform, then that is just not good enough.

I commend my friend, the Chairman of the Finance Committee. We get along reasonably well. We differ on certain ideological questions from time to time. However, I can commend him for keeping us going and for the work that is there. I saw him get to his feet reluctantly and I do not believe that he applauded the Minister. Well, I did not applaud the Minister either, and with good reason. I understand the Chairman's reticence, because the Minister of Finance has slapped the committee in the face and has kicked Canadians in the ass in the way that he has treated their need for a fair tax system.

This apostle of Christmas cheer, the Hon. Member for Etobicoke Centre, has chosen to make a few small changes. However, rather than having them paid for by the corporate sector as we proposed in committee, he is ensuring that they will be paid for by average Canadians. Average Canadians got "screwed" by the Minister of Finance.

The Minister, just to put it on record, is raising the price of a case of beer by 41 cents on 24 bottles, by 38 cents on a bottle of scotch, and by 26 cents on a carton of cigarettes. On behalf of average Canadians I want to convey with somewhat clenched teeth my greetings for a Merry Christmas to the Minister after what he has done to Christmas cheer.

This whole exercise is a bit like free trade. In this case Canadians have been consulted but ignored. In the case of free trade they were not consulted and they were ignored. On December 16 we are seeing a Ways and Means motion which, by parliamentary tradition, will enter into force on January 1. The legislation will come months later, but the message is very clear to average Canadians—do not bother to try to influence the legislation, do not bother to try to get any words into the conscience of the Minister of Finance. He did not listen over the last six months. He will not listen over the next six months. He is actually proud of a measure which does little or nothing to redress the imbalance in taxation between corporations and average Canadians and between rich Canadians and average Canadians. It is clear that not only the Minister but the Government has its head and heart on Bay Street, not on Main Street.

It goes without saying that the recommendations made by the New Democratic Party in our minority report, along with the report of the Finance Committee, have been ignored. Likewise, the recommendations made by my friends in the Liberal Party in its minority report were ignored. This was despite the fact that we were speaking for some 75 per cent of