

Excise Tax Act

the hon. member is going to be allowed to do so may I point out to him that in the resolution stage we attempted to move for the removal of the 11 per cent sales tax. We have indicated our opposition to it. The reason we abstained on the budget was that we did not want to vote no confidence in the government and get the Tories back in office, which would be even worse.

(*Translation*):

Mr. Ricard: Mr. Speaker, the fact that my remarks caused such a reaction in the other end of the house eloquently shows how sore a point I touched since both these representatives of small opposition parties have now been brought before the public opinion which will judge them as being in favour of the 11 per cent tax. I am not at all surprised at their reaction.

I wanted to show the people the way those gentlemen intend to defend the interests of their constituents.

Their attitude shows how afraid they are to go to the country, and that is why they abstained from voting on the one hand and, on the other hand, they voted for the legislation the first time. Today they are caught off their guard and—

An hon. Member: On a point of order—

Another hon. Member: There is no point of order.

(*Text*):

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Gregoire: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker—

Mr. Speaker: Order. I wish to make a point myself. We are discussing the excise tax.

(*Translation*):

Mr. Ricard: Mr. Speaker, I conclude my remarks by pointing out again to the public opinion in Canada the stand of those people and by emphasizing that we on this side of the house have been consistent in our conduct from the beginning to this day and that we shall remain consistent in the future, because we want to protect our constituents and we do not want them to have to pay an 11 per cent tax.

Those were the remarks I wanted to make, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Gerard Girouard (Labelle): Mr. Speaker, when the budget was introduced, there was much discussion concerning taxes. It will be recalled that the 30 per cent tax on the sale of Canadian securities to foreigners was even withdrawn afterwards. There were also some interesting measures, and some others which were less interesting, for instance the 11 per cent tax.

At that time, Social Crediters voted for the budget as a whole because it contained some good measures. However, as I said, some were less desirable, and among them there was the tax on building materials.

We recall very clearly that at that time, we proposed to discuss it and with that reservation, we stated in this house that we were voting for the budget as a whole in order to give the Minister of Finance the chance to introduce some amendments, which he did, for instance, when he came back in the house with a 4 per cent tax instead of the 11 per cent one and postponed also the imposition of that tax.

At that time, our group voted so as to enable the Minister of Finance to bring the amendment forward.

Today, reference is made to an amendment to this tax which now stands at 4 per cent.

It is interesting to note, Mr. Speaker, that the people who are proposing to abolish this 4 per cent tax are exactly the same people who, under the present economic system, could not act differently from the present government, because they always jeered at debt free money policy and they would not follow the policy that our group had set out for them in order to carry out the public investment programs, without taking any money out of the taxpayers' pockets. The leader of that group who says today: "Abolish that tax" is the same man who asked us repeatedly: "Where will you take that money?"

Mr. Speaker, if they will not raise funds according to the system advocated by the hon. members for Lapointe (Mr. Gregoire) and Villeneuve (Mr. Caouette), those funds will have to come out of the taxpayers' pockets, which is unfortunate, Mr. Speaker. Of course, the Social Credit party reserves the right to vote against any measure as unpopular as this tax, because Social Credit always was and still is against taxes.

But I understand very well that several members of this house stand against playing that political game which is brought up again just on the eve of the adjournment of parliament.

Mr. L. J. Pigeon (Joliette-L'Assomption-Montcalm): I only wish to make one comment, Mr. Speaker, to say that the hon. member for Labelle (Mr. Girouard) has just made the funeral oration of his party.

I hope that the Canadian people will remember the course of action followed by the members of the New Democratic party as