

Excise Tax Act

it was going to cut back on the program because we cannot afford it. A lot of our regions depend on that program and they are very angry about this change.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Layton): The time for questions and comments is terminated. Debate.

[Translation]

Mr. Jean-Claude Malépart (Montreal—Sainte-Marie): Mr. Speaker, I welcome this opportunity to take part in the debate on Bill C-117. However, I would have preferred to see a legislation that had something to offer Quebecers and Canadians, because the purpose of Bill C-117, which contains seventy-six pages and sixty-four sections, is simply to tax, tax and tax again. If we want to put a label on this Bill, you could say this is Brian the taxman's Bill. Since the election in 1984, this Conservative Government has brought down three Budgets, given us two economic messages, and managed to introduce twenty-seven new taxes and raise existing ones. Most Members in this House know that today, Canadians already have more than enough taxes on their plate, with all the tax increases I will now enumerate. First of all, on October 1, immediately after the election, we had a 1 per cent increase in sales tax, from 9 to 10 per cent, which raised the Government's revenue by \$1 billion. Subsequently, on January 1, 1986, we had another increase of 1 per cent, this time from 10 to 11 per cent, which put an extra billion per year into the kitty.

When we talk about \$1 billion in revenue for the Government, it means \$1 billion less in taxpayers' pockets.

• (1240)

In 1986, the Minister of Finance (Mr. Wilson) decided to raise sales tax again, from 11 to 12 per cent, which meant another billion dollars less in purchasing power for the Canadian taxpayer. We must not forget that these are hidden taxes. When the consumer buys a product, the Conservative Government's tax increases are already included in the price of that product.

If we look at another area, another commodity that is essential to every Canadian, and I am referring to gasoline, this Government raised the excise tax four times, which has meant a 23-cent increase in the price per gallon. On September 3, 1985, two cents a litre and \$900 billion taken out of taxpayers pockets. On January 1, 1987, another cent per litre: \$450 million. On February 19, 1987, the second time in the same year, another increase of one cent per litre, which means another \$450 million lost by taxpayers.

In April 1988, the price went up another cent per litre, which means that since 1984, we have had an increase of five cents per litre or 23 cents per gallon in taxes for Canadian consumers. When we consider the increase in the tax on gas, we must not forget this has an impact on all consumer goods, on food and clothing and furniture, all of which are being increasingly shipped by truck, and trucks run on gasoline. We have a situation where the poor cannot escape paying these increases because increased transportation costs are passed on

directly to the consumer, which means that whether you are rich or poor, the extra 23 cents a gallon is passed on as an increase in the price of a pound of butter, a loaf of bread, and automatically, whatever a person's income happens to be, we cannot escape the impact of the tax increase which in the final instance reduces the purchasing power of the consumer.

The Government has also launched a ferocious attack on alcohol and tobacco, so that consumers will have to pay another \$995 million. However, the Conservative Government went even further. After undermining the purchasing power and stealing the money of Canadian workers, it dug even deeper into their pockets, and I am referring to the fact that formerly, a number of products were considered essential and were therefore not taxed. This Government has decided to tax just about everything we have here in Canada. It started with candy and snacks. Then it was soft drinks, pet food and health care products. All health care products including aspirin, cough medicine, ointment, everything on the shelves used to be tax exempt, but now when you pay at the cash at your local drugstore, you are paying a "Mulroney" tax charged by the Government which you were not paying before, but the tax is hidden, so you don't notice it.

In addition we have all surgical and dental instruments. This means that when you go to the dentist with your child and you get a higher bill, you are once more hit by a Mulroney tax. Once this Government has hit something else, can you imagine that, such an important service as health for the young and the less young, it decided to tax all the instruments used. So, when you get a higher bill, you members of the public who are listening now, do not blame your dentist—remember it is a PC tax, a Conservative tax.

Something else again, insulation materials. Again they were tax exempt because they were necessary. But they also are hit by a PC tax. Wood stoves used to be tax exempt, now they are being subjected to another PC tax. Also hit are building materials that are used and made on the site. Now, when you pay for those materials a PC tax is added. People are not aware of a hidden tax, but that is a Conservative Party tax, a "Brian" tax.

And then you have videocassettes. The Government changed the taxing formula to get increased revenues. Here again, videocassettes users, you will be paying more but do not blame manufacturers. It is because of a PC tax.

Something else, the Government decided to tax wallpaper and paint products, to get more—once more, a PC tax. A tax you are not aware of—when you go and buy a gallon of paint or wallpaper at the hardware store to improve your home, suddenly you discover you have to pay much more than last year—this is quite simply because a PC tax was slapped on products that used to be tax exempt before this Conservative Government came to power.

Long distance calls were also exempt. Now the Government is imposing a 10 per cent tax on all long distance calls. All those living in rural areas, outside major centres, when you