

Excise Tax Act

Mr. Young (Gloucester): It may prove prophetic that the Canadian people may decide differently here.

I know that the Minister responsible for privatization also wants a gentler and more caring nation. Those are the kinds of things we hear in the Conservative rhetoric. However, the fact remains that Canadians, regardless of their political stripe, must understand what we are getting involved in in terms of what kind of Canada we are going to be living in.

As I looked at the materials that were made available to us by Global Television and assorted other people a couple of months ago, it was uncanny that dated April 27 we saw things and wondered whether it was not some sort of *déjà vu* in terms of last fall's election campaign. One wondered who wrote this stuff. Why sales tax reform? Because, among other reasons, it is damaging to the Canadian economy. It is a porous tax and an increasingly unreliable source of revenue, in terms of the existing federal sales tax.

Awfully important as well as the third basic flaw is that it is hidden from consumers. Tonight we are being asked to pass a series of tax increases, all of which are hidden from consumers, and all of which I suggest are part of the hidden agenda. It is not just hidden taxes, it is the hidden agenda that was kept from the people last fall that is now coming to light. It is a clear indication of where this Government wants to take us over the next three or four years.

The only visible thing during this session that the Government has put forward, and in particular the Minister of Finance (Mr. Wilson), is that they want to make sure that they hide every possible tax, or as was the case on April 7 when the Minister of Finance met with the Ministers of Finance from the 10 provinces, it was to try to get the provinces on board. On April 7, at a meeting held in Ottawa, the Ministers of Finance of the provinces were asked to indicate an interest to participate in a national sales tax scheme.

I would point out, because I feel it is appropriate at this time, that that national sales tax proposal that is referred to every now and again by Members to your right, Mr. Speaker, which was agreed to by members of the NDP and the Liberal Party in a unanimous report last year, was supposed to be visible. Every time we bring this matter up people suggest that it was a unanimous report and that we should be happy there is a reform going on. However, as usual, it is only part of what was

proposed, and that is misrepresented when it is presented to the people.

The provinces refused to participate in the imposition of a national sales tax asked of them on April 7 and then told to them on April 21 by the Minister of Finance who said that we are going it alone. There were no details, no negotiations or anything else. The Government just decided to go ahead. That makes it clear to me that the most important thing was not the imposition of a national sales tax but that the Government had to get the mechanism in gear to raise taxes as quickly as it could and as often as it could until January 1, 1991. That is why I repeat what I said earlier. In fact, when the taxes come into play in 1991 Members to your right, Mr. Speaker, will be able to point very clearly and proudly to the fact that the new tax will be revenue neutral. Taxes will have been raised so much—literally by billions of dollars from a couple of months ago to December 31, 1990—that there will be no possibility of getting any more taxes out of the Canadian people.

The Government will drain the tax well until there is nothing left in it. I am asking, and I am thinking that Members to your left, Mr. Speaker, are asking the people of Canada to join with us in insisting that the Government respect its commitments. However, if it is unable to do what it promised it would last fall in terms of implementing new programs such as day care and others because of deficits, high interest rates and because of the burgeoning national debt which it has doubled in four or five years, then the least we can ask of the Minister of Finance is that he respect his commitment to make this national sales tax visible.

Tonight, the House of Commons is being asked to authorize the Government to increase taxes on a tremendous series of services and goods that are essential to Canadian people. We all know that they are hidden taxes. The Minister of Finance has said time and time again in the House in response to questions: "People don't know how much they are paying for gas. They don't know how much tax there is on alcohol. People don't know how much tax there is on their telecommunications bill". We agree with that. However, we are being asked to do the same thing tonight.

It is a very strange conundrum that this new goods and services tax will have the result of having little signs in places of business all over the country and that we are going to hit the Canadian taxpayer with another series of hidden taxes. Everyone understands that people only pay taxes so long as they believe the system is fair and that the money is being spent reasonably well. That has always been put in doubt even at the best of times. However, the time is coming when Canadians are saying