

Income Tax

To that end, Mr. Chairman, I should like to move an amendment to subclause 4(1) of Bill C-11, on page 3, which reads as follows:

That subclause 4(1) of Bill C-11 be amended by striking out lines 17 and 18 on page 3 thereof and substituting the following:

"er, equal to the lesser of \$400 and 3 per cent of the aggregate of"

And adding thereto:

"or a deduction is allowed for all costs incurred while travelling to and from work by wage-earners using public transportation, on submission of receipts and vouchers."

In other words, the workers who can produce evidence that they used public transportation will be entitled to deduct the expenses incurred even up to \$600. I think that at present the amount is too low and, as I said a while ago, this would certainly relieve the congestion in cities and result in a saving of energy and subsidies.

● (1542)

[English]

Mr. Lumley: Mr. Chairman, while we understand the well-intentioned motive behind the hon. member's motion, he must realize that you cannot use the tax system to solve basic problems in respect of urban transit. Some of these problems are individually controlled—do I drive a large car, a small car, do I live close to my work, or far away from it? The final point in respect of the hon. member's suggestion is that, again, it would be a bureaucratic nightmare, involving reams of paper and vouchers, which obviously would not facilitate the easy implementation of a measure of this nature.

[Translation]

Mr. Allard: Mr. Chairman, this is not what I asked the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance (Mr. Lumley). It is quite simple, it is merely a matter of producing receipts to the effect that a person has used public transport during working hours. It is somewhat the same as when someone files his income tax return and produces receipts to obtain certain deductions allowed by the act, it is as simple as that. That is all I am asking for in this amendment; that the government increase to at least \$400 the expenses incurred by those who use public transport to go to work.

[English]

Mr. Lumley: Mr. Chairman, there is discrimination involved inasmuch as there are many people who do not have access to urban transit and would not be in a position to benefit from the hon. members' suggestion.

Mr. Orlikow: Mr. Chairman, I could not help but be struck by the comment of the parliamentary secretary in answer to questions put by my colleague, the hon. member for Yorkton-Melville, regarding business deductions. The parliamentary secretary said, as the minister has said on earlier occasions, that an attempt to get workers to account for actual expenses in order to obtain deductions would involve an administrative nightmare. I think those are the words he used. I suppose it would, as it is the workers who are concerned, but apparently it is not for—

[Mr. Allard.]

[Translation]

Mr. Pinard: I rise on a point of order, Mr. Chairman. I understand that you have asked hon. members to take part in the debate concerning the amendment moved by the hon. member from the Social Credit party. I am wondering whether the hon. member is dealing with the amendment or rather with a matter that has already been raised by one of his colleagues.

The Assistant Deputy Chairman: I understand that he is speaking on the amendment. The hon. member for Winnipeg North.

[English]

Mr. Orlikow: Mr. Chairman, I was speaking on clause 4. If you want to deal with the amendment first—

The Assistant Deputy Chairman: Order, please. I referred the hon. member to the amendment. If he wishes to discuss the clause, he may do so at a later time; but we should dispose of the amendment first.

[Translation]

Mr. Laprise: Mr. Chairman, I would like to give my support to the amendment of my colleague from Rimouski (Mr. Allard) and give some explanations about that amendment. I do not know whether the parliamentary secretary to the minister did understand the amendment which the hon. member for Rimouski just read out and which you read yourself immediately afterwards but I feel hon. members may not fully appreciate the purport of that amendment. The original version of the clause of the legislation before us simply proposes to increase the present exemption from \$150 to \$250 a year.

We found that \$150 was definitely not enough and the additional \$100, considering the sharp increase in the cost of gasoline, auto parts and so on, cannot offset the expenses incurred by workers who have to commute to work. My colleague from Rimouski has moved an amendment to increase the basic amount to at least \$400 or 3 per cent of all expenses incurred. Therefore, Mr. Chairman, there is nothing excessive in that basic part. The amendment goes on:

or a deduction is allowed for all costs incurred while travelling to and from work by wage-earners using public transportation, on submission of receipts and vouchers.

This means that the person who prefers to use a public transit system to get to work, when such a system is available, may choose to do so and obtain the deduction of the true expenses he or she has incurred, upon submission of the necessary vouchers. It does not take a wizard to understand that. I feel that the employees of the Department of National Revenue are quite capable of holding the accounts. They have the accountants they need, and if they need more, we can supply some who can hold the accounts and check what expenses have really been incurred. In my opinion, my colleague the hon. member for Rimouski has introduced an amendment which has a lot of merit and which should deal more fairly with the Canadian workers and employees who must travel to get to work.