

If any of us survive the next three years we'll be happy to put the rest of the government into retirement so they too can reap the benefits like the rest of us. I can't take much more of the Liberal good news; you see, I'm a pensioner and am completely overjoyed. All things considered, have a good day.

Critically yours,
Les Chayka

Mr. Ray Hnatyshyn (Saskatoon-Biggar): Mr. Speaker, I want to comment briefly on the remarks made by my hon. friend over there for the constituency of sanctimony.

Mr. Rodriguez: Nickel Belt.

Mr. Hnatyshyn: I appreciate the fact that when he speaks, it is from the Olympus, but I want to point out that spending a good portion of his time with respect to this legislation in railing against the official opposition, as he did before the last election, is probably one of the reasons I am sitting here today. I think he would do more good if he directed his attention to the government and its failings: the people of Canada expect that of him.

I do not think the hon. member should take credit for being the spokesman of the working people of this country, and I am proud of the position of each member of my party. I think I detect more compassion for the average citizen from the members of my party than from any of the members of the NDP.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Rodriguez: How sanctimonious.

Mr. Hnatyshyn: We should deal with the provisions of this bill and its failings. I think it is incumbent upon us to use our time for constructive criticism. An opportunity has been given to members of the House of Commons to bring forward the points of view they have received from their constituents with respect to this bill. I am sorry the minister is not here today, but I can tell the government that I am receiving representations from my constituents who find this to be a rather unsatisfactory bill, to say the least, and an unsatisfactory tax. The Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Stanfield) is to be commended for proposing his amendment. The overwhelming majority of people in Canada are in support of the concept of giving, not just a six months' hoist but a permanent hoist as far as the tax on gasoline is concerned.

In the debate being conducted on the amendment proposed by the Leader of the Opposition it is important to consider the background of this bill and some of the considerations leading up to the bringing forward of the legislation. The legislation arises by virtue of the second budget brought forward in this session by the Minister of Finance (Mr. Turner). The budget introduced by the Minister of Finance on November 18, 1974, simply did not meet the two outstanding economic problems facing Canada today, namely, the extremely high unemployment rate, combined with an ongoing and apparently accelerating inflation rate. Listening to the statements made by the Minister of Finance and the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) with respect to bringing into effect a budget in this session, there seemed to unfold a scenario of a gradual dawning on the government that the measures outlined in the

Excise Tax Act

first budget were simply not coping with the two-pronged economic problem of our country today.

It was almost pathetic to observe and hear the Prime Minister come to the conclusion that inflation was the number one problem in our country, because it appeared to me that the Prime Minister was possibly the last person in Canada who finally came to that conclusion. Whether this belated enlightenment was due to the fact that the Prime Minister does not do the shopping in his family, or because of the fact that, being associated with the Liberal government for the period of time he has, he is an adherent of one of the basic credos of that party—namely, money is no concern—I do not know.

As far as the Minister of Finance is concerned, we had hoped for better things. I said in the budget debate on his first budget this session that I had garnered the impression and opinion that he was attempting to introduce restraint amongst his cabinet colleagues, and that it was to be hoped he would continue with the apparent vigour he brings to the House, in a physical sense, during deliberations with his cabinet colleagues in this particular area. I had hoped that he would take seriously the fight with respect to inflation.

The Minister of Finance is a vigorous man. He bounds in and out of this chamber and exudes this particular facet of his personality. One can surmise that his physical vigour has been brought about by the almost continuous economic sit-ups he has been carrying out with respect to his attempts to obtain consensus on voluntary restraint by all segments of the private sector. His goal of good health has no doubt been assisted by his dodging and weaving since last November of questioners and critics pointing out to him the fact that his budget of November, 1974, in which he had so much confidence, was simply not accomplishing the results he had desired. What is, however, of most immediate interest to the minister's physical fitness adviser is that by the budget brought down on June 23 the minister is apparently dedicated to the unfortunate economic policy—but acceptable physical culture program—of running on the spot.

The minister brought down his most recent budget with a lack of enthusiasm which was noticed by the press as well as by everyone in this House. Notwithstanding the persistent and uniform representations, demands and exhortations by those in our country who follow and are interested in the economic welfare of Canada, together with the pleas of the average citizen across our country to take dramatic and strong steps to meet the economic problems facing us today, the minister has brought forward a budget and legislation such as Bill C-66 which do nothing to meet our problem—and, in fact, on analysis can only have the effect of accentuating the serious problems which we face.

One realizes the difficulties faced by the minister in facing up, at this late date, to the extreme complexities of the economic issues of the day created through inflation and a severe business recession. The minister's lack of enthusiasm with respect to the second budget was evident some time before it was brought down. It was clear that the minister either did not have any concise and practical ideas with respect to dealing with the problems or, to say the very least, he was not obtaining the co-operation a