

the private sector in local campaigns. It is disappointing to me that the provincial government allowed people to believe that it would match personal donations in the ratio of three to one when in fact the ratio was less than one to one.

I know the Ontario government made other commitments, but the perception of the people of my area was that the provincial government would give \$3 for every one dollar. There are many disillusioned people who would not now give in a similar disaster because of the way this was handled.

The effect of a disaster such as this was probably best summed up by the claims co-ordinator and his secretary who were in charge of the disaster relief program in the Oxford, Brant and Haldimand-Norfolk area. I have a 15-page document here in which they went through the chronological sequence of events during the rebuild period, and there is a summary at the end which is worth reading to show the emphasis put on the effect the disaster has had on human beings. The summary reads as follows:

The lives of the victims will probably never be quite the same again, because in less than one hour on the evening of August 7, 1979, their lives suffered a grave disruption in the form of total destruction of all they had worked for, and in many cases, for the whole of their lives, and now retirement was not to be so comfortable. Many memories had gone with the wind, literally. Most just began to realize, late in the winter months, how the shock had affected their personal beings. Many years will pass before a recovery can be realized both materially and emotionally.

Thanks to many generous and caring people, the trauma was eased somewhat.

Finally, I want to move to what I think should be the response of the government to the problem we have before us. Back in May of last year I asked a question of the Minister of Finance (Mr. MacEachen), and in my supplementary question I asked this:

Does the minister condone the raising of revenues by the federal tax on building materials at the expense of those who have suffered immeasurable loss and grief as a result of natural disasters?

The minister's reply was as follows:

Madam Speaker, I am sure that in certain cases the application of the tax system may have unfortunate effects such as the one he described, but there is not to my knowledge within that system at present a way by which these particular difficulties could be overcome.

I presume as a result of that question on May 20, 1980, that six weeks later, on July 4, the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) announced the appointment of the President of the Privy Council (Mr. Pinard) as the person to be responsible for, and I quote:

—providing ministerial guidance for policy development, interdepartmental co-ordination and liaison with provincial governments in the area of emergency planning.

Mr. Pinard's new responsibilities will cover federal planning related to natural disasters, major accidents—

I see an attempt by the government, and I praise the government for it, to recognize the fact that there is a problem between the federal and provincial levels with respect to funding after natural disasters and, more particularly, a problem regarding the federal government's image. This is not a big problem. I hope the parliamentary secretary does not try to tell us that to rebate this kind of tax on building materials would be a problem because the federal government already

rebates to schools. It rebates 1.5 per cent of tender prices to schools. It rebates about 2.5 per cent of total hospital construction costs. I know there are certain criteria within which eligibility lies, but nonetheless this is done for many other public and municipal institutions when rebates seem appropriate. Gasoline taxes are rebated to farmers. There is just no reason, from a logistical point of view, why this could not be handled simply in much the same way as it is for schools and hospitals.

I see that my time is almost up. I want to close by appealing to this House, and to the parliamentary secretary in particular because I realize he has an important role to play in this area relating to the remission of federal taxes on building materials.

In the broader area of disaster planning I remind the government of something Edmund Burke said a couple of centuries ago which is still very apt. When he was giving his second speech respecting conciliation with America Edmund Burke said this:

It is not what a lawyer tells me I *may* do; but what humanity, reason and justice tell me I *ought* to do.

● (1720)

I think all of us here in the House of Commons as legislators must take heed of what Edmund Burke said, that we have an obligation to do what we ought to do. I urge the parliamentary secretary, as he speaks to this question, to address himself to the matter of whether or not there is an obligation on the part of governments to forgo that tax which is levied on the poor people who have suffered losses, losses which in no way can an insurance policy replace and in no way can funds raised by the public replace. Many of those losses consist of memorabilia, losses which cannot be replaced by money. The least we can do as a federal government is to forgo those taxes which we would take from Canadians, and rightly so in other situations, but not when they are the victims of a natural disaster designated as such by provincial governments.

Mr. John Evans (Parliamentary Secretary to Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, I hope I can respond to some of the questions of the hon. member for Oxford (Mr. Halliday). He can rest assured that this government, and certainly the Minister of Finance (Mr. MacEachen), are extremely concerned about the problems he has put forward. It is my understanding that we will have difficulty in supporting this particular measure or this particular approach, but it certainly goes without saying that the hon. member has our whole support in his concern for disaster assistance, whether it be here in Canada or in other parts of the world. I am sure that his support is not only in the case of Canadian disasters but would go to other areas as well. An example of that, of course, is the disaster which has devastated villages in Italy recently. Certainly disaster assistance must be provided in such cases, as it should be in the case of the disaster in Mississauga.

If we want to establish some mechanism for assistance by the federal government, however, we should look for an approach which is both workable and efficient. There are some