

Income Tax Act

education and that we should be able to provide it for our children.

Now I come to the subject of a dignified retirement. Many people thought when they retired ten or 15 years ago that they had worked for their society which they had helped to build, that it had become strong and they could count on a dignified retirement. That hope of a dignified retirement has now gone or is disappearing. We are finding a cynical and a discouraged attitude among those who worked and saved and now find that their savings are gone. These things are now out of reach for people.

Rising unemployment and inflation in Canada today are unacceptably high, while real investment and after-tax incomes of Canadians are lagging. Perhaps even more disturbing is the weakness of capital spending by business for modernization of plant and equipment, which creates the jobs Canadians need for the future, leads to higher real wages, and leads to the possibility that these very basic goals of a house, an education, a dignified retirement are brought back into reality.

Over the past several years the rate of capacity growth in manufacturing has slowed considerably. Canada is lagging behind nearly all OECD countries in the rate of investment and is not keeping pace with our need to create jobs, combat pollution and fight inflation as well. This bill is not a solution in the short or long-term. It is not a solution to the economic problems of Canada. It is a temporary token, a confused and inequitable bandaid. The government has failed the country economically and this bill, with its useless, half attempt to try to make an economic correction not only does not make an economic correction but is a disaster as far as the national unity of this country is concerned.

This bill should be withdrawn, renegotiated and replaced with a bill that makes not a token, temporary tax cut, but a substantive tax cut which will provide a new incentive for Canadians to work, thereby through their work reviving their aspirations toward the very basic needs that all of us in this House hold for Canada and Canadians.

Mr. Alan Martin (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to have the opportunity to participate in this debate on Bill C-56. I think we all recognize it as being an important aspect of the budget proposals that were brought down by the Minister of Finance (Mr. Chrétien) on April 10 last.

As one of four chartered accountants in this House of Commons—the only one from Ontario—three, I believe, on our side and one on the official opposition side—from time to time I feel it somewhat of a responsibility and indeed a privilege to participate regularly in the debates of this House where we are dealing with fiscal and economic matters.

Many of us have found much satisfaction in the work in committees, myself included, where there is a great opportunity for backbenchers to make important and meaningful contributions to various issues that come before committees with which we are associated. However, it has to be borne in mind that here in this central forum of our national governing

[Mr. Wenman.]

process is where the real action is, not because of any greater cut of thrust that might occur here than in committees—in fact, I think it is probably the reverse—but because this is basically the heart of our over-all parliamentary institution. For that reason it is important for us, during a debate of this nature, to put facts on the table and to dispel notions that are being conveyed across this land by people who profit from this kind of thing and whose objective in life is to make Canadians look at themselves and say “Gosh, I think I am far worse off than I am”. I have never been a member of the opposition, but I suppose they look upon that as part of their official function and their main job in life.

● (2112)

Mr. Paproski: You sure will be, or you will be defeated.

Mr. Martin: I do not anticipate being a member of any opposition party in this House in the foreseeable future, and I fully plan on being back here after the next election.

Again I say, not having been a member of the opposition, I find it hard to rationalize just what their function is or how they see their function. I listen to the Leader of the Official Opposition (Mr. Clark), and to the leader of the unofficial opposition and the finance critic of the official opposition, the hon. member for York-Simcoe (Mr. Stevens). At times I shake my head in astonishment, not so much at the details of what I hear—although for the most part they are rather incredulous, and, as recent events tended to indicate, often at best wishful thinking with no foundation in fact—but at the general approach they take. They take a very negative gloom and doom approach toward all the very many positive accomplishments of the Canadian economy over the past ten years and currently.

What I find rather incredible is really two factors. First, these distinguished members, the leaders of the two major opposition parties and the finance critic for the opposition from York-Simcoe, are, first and foremost, members of parliament. That seems to say their initial task is to represent at the federal level, each of them, many thousands of hard working Canadians who reside in their individual areas, whether it is Rocky Mountain, Oshawa-Whitby or York-Simcoe.

Those Canadians, not unlike Canadians residing in my constituency of Scarborough West or the constituencies of other members in this House, are for the most part reasonably well employed people, reasonably content and reasonably confident in the ability of themselves and their fellow Canadians across this country to continue to improve their collective economic situation and ultimately overcome those identified problems which we all acknowledge continue to plague us and for which this government is constantly seeking meaningful solutions.

This extreme attitude of negativism in the face of positive accomplishments in the past and in the present appal and really disturb me. This is true whether it comes from members opposite or the media, although in fairness I frankly blame the media to a somewhat less extent. After all, their job is to sell