

Income Tax

somehow have to get to every household to be sure they are defeated.

If members opposite who come from Ontario, Quebec, New Brunswick, Newfoundland, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, British Columbia, the Yukon and the Northwest Territories vote to tax their people for insulation grants, when those in Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island are not going to be taxed, they deserve the ultimate punishment, banishment by the electorate. It cannot be justified.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Chrétien: Mr. Chairman—I am sorry—I thought the hon. member had finished.

Mr. Crosbie: I am not finished. I was only taking a breath. If the minister is getting up to agree to withdraw the clause, I will subside and we can get on with this.

There are a couple of other items. Heating bills will be reduced by 38 per cent. This afternoon I made the mistake of speaking for five minutes and asking a couple of questions. I never got another chance to speak until tonight. I will not make that mistake again. I will speak my full time, and then ask my questions at the end.

I do not want the Minister of Finance to be thought of by some people as Mr. Slippery Heels. I know he does not mean to be a slippery heel. He wants to give us the full information and not try to slide around or slip out of anything. I have a great deal of regard for that hon. gentleman.

This afternoon I asked him two questions which he did not answer. The first question was: what do the minister's officials calculate will be the tax return to them by having these grants taxable in eight provinces of Canada? What, if anything, will that be for the government?

The other question was: what is the estimate of the cost of the program excluding Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island? When the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources introduced this program, the estimate was that it was going to cost \$45 million by the end of March, 1978, and that the program would cover 133,000 units. Their estimate was that next year it would cover 462,000 units and cost \$145 million.

I gave figures to the committee this afternoon which showed that up until November 25 there had only been 5,000 applications and only half a million dollars spent. Obviously it will cost \$45 million this year. People are not going for it. They do not like it. They know it is inequitable. Obviously it is not attractive to them despite the fact that they should insulate their homes better. Can we have these figures?

These are my questions that were ignored when the Minister of Finance got up this afternoon and made a political reply, which he should not do. As Minister of Finance, he should not be political. He should be like his predecessors who were never political, the hon. member for Rosedale and the former member for Ottawa-Carleton. They were predatory, but not political. The minister should just deal with the facts.

[Mr. Crosbie.]

The Deputy Chairman: Order, please. I regret to interrupt the hon. member but his allotted time has expired.

● (2032)

Mr. Chrétien: I think I have to reply to this point because I should like to have the amendment disposed of very quickly. I would point out that the cost of the program is \$4.7 billion over seven years for the eight provinces to which he referred, and the cost of the program if it were not taxable would be \$560 million more, and would increase the total cost of the program to \$5,160 million.

The hon. member discussed the design of the program at length. There was further discussion about it today involving the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources and his provincial counterparts. I gave the reasons why the government had to move in two stages. It is a difficult proposition. I find it extraordinary that, after four weeks spent here in discussing the financial situation of the nation, one member of the House should get up and propose an extra item of expenditure, like \$560 million over the next seven years. I say once again that I hope that proposal will be defeated very quickly, and I shall be watching the hon. member for Provencher closely to see what attitude he takes toward it.

Mr. Crosbie: I do not like to interrupt the minister, but he is not factual. Our proposal would be to extend the same program as they have in Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island over a period of four or five years. I did not advocate spending another \$560 million this year. The hon. member should not twist my words. I do not want to lose my respect for the hon. gentleman, because I did not have too much to start with.

Mr. Paproski: Might I ask the minister a question concerning the insulation program which Alberta has now agreed to join? What was the deal with Alberta, and what other deal did the federal government abandon in order to get Alberta into this program? The answer might shed a little light on things, so perhaps we could have an explanation.

Mr. Chrétien: There was discussion on this subject between the ministers today and they reached an agreement. I do not know the terms of that agreement. I have been in my place here all day, and I cannot be in two places at the same time. The Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources, who is responsible for that program, will be in the House tomorrow and hon. members can put questions to him at that time. We have spent a lot of time in this Chamber today discussing a program which does not come under my department. I merely want to say that if the proposal of the hon. member for St. John's West is adopted we shall be spending another \$560 million. You know, Mr. Chairman, I shall be very pleased in my speeches around the nation to draw attention to the double-talk of the official opposition.

Mr. Paproski: I want to know whether this involves any tax. Surely the Minister of Finance must have had a conversation with the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources before he went into the meeting today. What kind of sweetheart deal did