

Excise Tax Act

savings and the reaction of businessmen that confidence has not been increased over the last month and 10 days or so since the economic and fiscal statement was brought down. Canadians await some positive signals. In fact, some number of Canadians, and how many is surely not yet clear, are waiting for the day that they receive their last pay cheque before they join the jobless rolls. They then receive unemployment insurance, which increases the cost of government, and they begin looking for work.

Each of those actions will reduce confidence, not build it up. Those actions will reduce the amount of money people have to spend and increase the cost of government, forcing it to borrow more money in order to meet those costs. That, of course, is the very heart of the misguided policies that this Government is following, which policy was expressed early on in the decision to carry through the sales tax increase on October 1. Those policies were expressed in the determination to deal with the deficit instead of recognizing that the deficit is only a symptom. What the Canadian people want is a government which says we need more spending. If we have individual Canadians spending money, we should not take it out of their pocket with taxation. We should find ways to put them to work doing the constructive things this country needs. When we do those things we genuinely build up confidence, but it seems this Government has no sense of that kind of needed activity at all.

We then face, Mr. Speaker, a situation in which misguided policies are all too likely to bring us into a severe recession in 1985. God only knows what will come after that. We live then in a situation in which the popular sense that Tory times are hard times is all too likely to be fulfilled by the present Government because of its misguided policies as reflected in Bill C-17 and its various provisions.

Notice, too, that part of the mistaken reasoning which exists in the Government is reflected in the fact that the sales tax increase the Government asserts was designed to raise money to cover the cost of the special capital recovery projects which the previous Government brought forward is being imposed at a time of semi-depression. No one has any reason to object to borrowing money if we are building things which make this country a better place to live, particularly if it is part of the strategy of moving us back towards full employment. At that point our fiscal difficulties are going to be much easier and the deficit the Minister of Finance (Mr. Wilson) is preoccupied with will be gone. But what we see instead is an assertion that the Liberal program was to raise the money required for these projects by taxation and this Government is going through with that.

The gibes earlier this afternoon about bickering, or whatever it was, between sweethearts, the noise one hears between the Official Opposition and the Government benches, leaves no doubt about the bickering lovers in this place. The Right Hon. Prime Minister (Mr. Mulroney), at one point when referring to bickering, recognized the appropriateness of the fact that here were lovers who struggled for control with the very same

ideas in their heads. Now the other bunch have power and they follow through with the same programs.

There is no sense at all here of achieving the real change that Canadians want. There is no recognition of the truth that Tom Maxwell of the Conference Board of Canada tried to remind us of during the election campaign. Certainly recovery depends on lower interest rates, and God help us if the Americans do not achieve lower interest rates in order to save the rest of the world from the disaster that stares us in the face, not just Canada but Latin America and various other parts of the world.

If I may conclude, Mr. Speaker, given this preoccupation with the same policy, given a preoccupation with interest rates, there is no sense of a need for real change, a need for a government which will work towards full employment and prosperity. Instead we have this unfortunate preoccupation with taxation, with taking money out of the pockets of Canadians after the money for the special recovery projects has been spent. It means more taxation and more depression for Canadians.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): Questions or comments on the Hon. Member's speech? Since there are no questions or comments I would like to recognize the Hon. Member for Kootenay West (Mr. Brisco).

Mr. Bob Brisco (Kootenay West): Mr. Speaker, I am particularly pleased to have the opportunity to address one particular element of the Bill, that being Section 49.01. The elements contained within that section were really a cornerstone of Conservative policy towards the forest and mining industries, particularly in Kootenay West.

Bearing in mind that in Kootenay West we have the highest unemployment level in British Columbia and we are among the top eight in Canada, what is it about this particular provision which is so attractive and important to the forest and mining sectors? It is the fuel tax rebate of three cents a litre, which may not seem to be a significant sum. However, Mr. Speaker, I can assure you that a truck logger who drives for 15 or 20 miles on very steep, mountainous roads, usually using the bottom end of his gear box, has a high consumption of fuel. In colder weather the vehicles tend to burn more fuel by virtue of shrinkage. That five, 15 or 25 miles of bush road, and in the case of Kootenay West mountain road, is only the first part of his journey. The next part is to get those logs to the mill site. That can mean a journey of 10 to 150 miles. There is a lot of time spent on the highway. In many instances it takes as long to traverse the 15-mile bush road as it does to get to the mill pond using higher speeds on the highway.

● (1540)

That is really not important. The important thing is that I have been assured that Section 49.01, which refers to off-road use, will have the widest latitude in its application. Off-road use would imply that the tax rebate would only apply on the bush road. The difficulty with that is that at times that bush road is a privately-owned, ungazetted road into a privately-