

*Excise Tax Act***PROCEEDINGS ON ADJOURNMENT
MOTION**

[English]

SUBJECT MATTER OF QUESTIONS TO BE DEBATED

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Penner): Order, please. It is my duty, pursuant to Standing Order 40, to interrupt the proceedings and inform the House that the questions to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment are as follows: The hon. member for Edmonton-Strathcona (Mr. Roche)—External Affairs—Suggested United States support for Commonwealth plan to close gap between rich and poor nations; the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles)—Social Security—Date of implementation of guaranteed annual income program; the hon. member for Okanagan-Kootenay (Mr. Johnston)—Administration of Justice—Crash of Panarctic aircraft—Government position on resumption of inquest or federal inquiry.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

EXCISE TAX ACT

The House resumed consideration of the motion of Mr. Turner (Ottawa-Carleton) that Bill C-66, to amend the Excise Tax Act, be read the second time and referred to committee of the whole; and the amendment thereto of Mr. Stanfield (p. 7416).

Mr. Robert C. Coates (Cumberland-Colchester North): Mr. Speaker, after the excellent contribution by the hon. member for Parry Sound-Muskoka (Mr. Darling) it is rather difficult to follow in his footsteps. I must congratulate him for his excellent choice of language in describing this most discriminatory piece of legislation, probably the most discriminatory in respect of which I have taken part in a debate since coming to this House.

There is a rather strange thing about this budget. The Minister of Finance (Mr. Turner) has done a pretty good job of handling a rather difficult portfolio by always producing a budget that, while it naturally contained things distasteful to the taxpayers of the nation, carried with it some things that were realistic and helpful, thus making it rather difficult for members of the opposition party to stand and unequivocally criticize the package presented.

In this case there is nothing in the budget to lead anyone to believe it will be of benefit to anyone in the nation. It certainly will produce some rank discrimination against groups of individuals who are by and large carrying the greatest tax burden on their shoulders at this time. I refer specifically to the working people of this nation, those who go to the factories day in and day out to produce the goods that we sell not only here but overseas with the hope of producing a balance of payments which will keep us living in the style to which we have become accustomed. With this rag-bag of tax increases the minis-

[Mr. Darling.]

ter has put all the tax load on the same working people who have no way, within our tax laws, to retrieve any benefit whatever. They have no expense accounts they can use to overcome the extra load they are now being asked to carry.

While I accept the two-price system for oil which makes it possible for Canadians to drive cars and heat their homes at a lesser rate than the international price of oil, I do not want to ask any working man in any part of this country to carry the load for me individually, as this budget asks at this moment in time. I cannot understand why an individual who works in, shall we say, an automobile plant at Oshawa or Oakville who has to drive 20 or 30 miles to work should have to pay an extra ten cents a gallon, which he cannot recover, in order that we may have two-price system for oil.

● (1700)

There must be a more realistic method to raise the funds required in which every taxpayer in this nation would bear the burden equally and in which certain individuals in this nation who can least afford this burden would not be singled out. I can think of 101 ways in which the same job could have been done better. I find it passing strange that this kind of budget should be produced. I wonder whether the Minister of Finance had the unrequested assistance of some of his colleagues, who fumble and bumble every time they tackle anything, when he produced this package in respect of which they now disassociate themselves every time they are questioned about it, by saying that the Minister of Finance is responsible for the budget and therefore he is the one who should handle questions concerning it.

We believe this matter could have been handled for the benefit of the Canadian people in a much more sensible and able manner than by this very discriminatory tax. Let us look at some of the things the government could have done as an alternative to this ten cents a gallon tax. First we have the grandiose plan of the Minister of Transport (Mr. Marchand) which is now before the House. Surely, if the government wants to conserve oil, one way would be to produce a transportation system in this country which people could use and which would be enticing, instead of allowing the railways to perpetuate second-rate transportation systems while charging first-rate prices. Certainly, if we had better passenger train operations across this nation and better urban transit systems available in the urban centres, we could get the people involved in other modes of transportation, which would eliminate the over-use of gasoline in which every Canadian is now involved because he does not have alternative transportation.

Canadians, especially the working people, are forced to get into their automobiles to drive to work—if they are able to find a job. Coupled with that is the fact that every workingman in this nation finds that because of the new costs he will face in order to get to his place of employment he will have to ask his employer for additional money. The employer, because he will be faced with additional costs, will have to charge more for his products.

Mr. Alexander: So the vicious circle goes.