

Excise Tax Act

Marie (Mr. Malépart) because he should have been here to see what happened before his speech—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Very well. Order, please. Would the Hon. Members let the Hon. Member for Saint-Léonard—Anjou (Mr. Gagliano) resume his speech and listen to him?

Mr. Gagliano: Mr. Speaker, I do not intend to take too much time, but I would simply like to share an experience with my colleagues, even if they do not want to listen, and, as I say, usually they do not. What can you do about that, the facts are there. We have had this Conservative Government for two years now and, as we have already seen, their great thrust, which is on the economic side, is leaking from everywhere. But last summer, Mr. Speaker, I had an interesting experience. I led a task force on small businesses for my party. Then I had the privilege of travelling across the land, from Vancouver to Halifax, and I met with many business people, men and women, who were committed to this country's economic development and who worked long hours in their businesses, often with very little reward or profit.

Of course, Mr. Speaker, they were concerned, as I said earlier and as shown in the poll taken in February 1986 about a pension fund and because taxation rates were too high in Canada. And when I say taxation, I cannot do as the Minister of Finances who wants to reduce income tax and increase the other taxes, because when Canadians talk about taxes, they have in mind sales taxes, permits and income tax, everything. Nowadays, when Canadians figure out their taxes, they add up all what they pay. Mr. Speaker, I think that my comments apply to all parties in this House. It is too much. The message was clear, the Canadian taxpayers' tax burden has to be lessened. This is one of the major concerns of Canadians either whether they live in Vancouver, Halifax, Calgary, Montreal Quebec City or whatever.

The other concern of Canadians, Mr. Speaker, had to do with pension plans. Small businesses can only create their pension fund with what is now called a RRSP or registered retirement savings plan, it is the only way. This is not like our own retirement plan. There is a pension fund for Members of Parliament, for public servants, and for teachers; everyone has a pension fund. However, the businessman has no pension fund and often those people work for 20 or 30 years and when a misfortune occurs, they have nothing left, no unemployment insurance, no pension, nothing.

Mr. Speaker, I think that the Government should move in that direction. The Conservative Government being in power, it should act without delay. We, in the Opposition, are going to make it part of our Party platform, and as soon as we form the next Government, we are going to act immediately contrary to the Conservatives who are still studying after two years. Of course, the whole tax issue must be addressed seriously; significant and concrete tax breaks should be given to small businesses. We should make it possible for them to invest in a pension fund. In fact, in its May 1985 Budget and again in its February 1986 Budget, this Government had proposed to allow

a certain amount of the pension fund money from various municipalities or organizations to be invested in small businesses. However, Mr. Speaker, this plan does not work, because it is very difficult to convince business people to invest in a concern with only one manager and lacking the administrative structure of a large corporation.

Theoretically, therefore, it could be possible to invest pension funds in small businesses; in real life, however, this does not happen very much and what people would like to have is for the Government to consider a system whereby a businessman who has put away some money in a pension fund or RRSP, to invest this money in his own small business. Wherever we went, that was one of the recommendations that were made.

Of course, this matter should be examined from every angle, because it is nevertheless necessary to preserve the pension funds, so that when the time comes, there is pension money, because we are well aware that small businesses are high risk ventures; but there is also the whole tax issue, and the small businessman should be allowed to use as capital for his business the money he has invested in his own registered pension fund.

Mr. Speaker, as Member for Saint-Léonard—Anjou, I know small businesses very well, having worked in the field as an accountant for several years. I will make a commitment to seek a pension scheme, so that we—even our young people, because they often tell us: Yes, we should like to go and work in the Public Service because of its pension plan. When the time comes for us to retire, we would be O.K.; but in the business world, there are too many question marks. When one has a pension scheme, one can say: Listen, beside the privilege of being self-employed, with all the power a businessman has, the courage he can demonstrate, in the end, to get a pension fund—

● (1740)

[English]

Mr. Riis: I rise on a point of order. Earlier today during Question Period the President of the Treasury Board (Mr. de Cotret) referred to various documents. He indicated his willingness to provide them to the Leader of the New Democratic Party. Would it be appropriate to ask the President of the Treasury Board to table those documents in the House.

Mr. Lewis: I rise on the same point of order. I know that would normally be something that is addressed directly after Question Period. On behalf of the Government, I will be pleased to make inquiries and see if we cannot table those documents or make them available to the opposition.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Very well, resuming debate.

Mr. Simon de Jong (Regina East): Mr. Speaker, I note the lateness of the hour and see that it is a scarce House of Commons. Because it is the supper hour, I assume that a fair