

Income Tax Act

believe in it, many fail to offer alternatives, or offer such weak alternatives that they are ludicrous.

The other day I had the opportunity of appearing on a panel discussion with the hon. member for Parry Sound-Muskoka (Mr. Aiken) and he suggested that the leader of his party, if he were ever Prime Minister, would withdraw the white paper. That is the sort of thing we can expect in the name of tax reform! I suggest there is developing, for the first time in this country, a significant radical right, and I think Canadians should be conscious of this. Groups are springing up in the name of tax reform that are using tax reform as a tool to discredit any social benefits or movement that the country is making toward a just society—and I am not afraid of that term.

Mr. Bell: Ha, ha!

Mr. Danson: The hon. member for Saint John-Lancaster (Mr. Bell) may laugh at the expression "just society". I do not think we will ever have a just society, any more than we will ever have an equitable tax system. But I suggest it is not a bad objective, and I would like to see his party substitute something better.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): It is too bad that the Prime Minister dropped it.

Mr. Danson: If he drops it, I will pick it up. To me it is an objective, an ideal, and ideals are things to which we should aspire.

To get back to the notice of motion, I suggest that the provision in the white paper seems inadequate to most of the members of the committee. I suggest the hon. member has given us room for thought when we pursue the matter further and listen to representations made by delegations appearing before the committee, particularly those representing labour groups who might have more to say on the matter. It also presents some quite massive administrative problems.

The hon. member is concerned about growing bureaucracy. Again this might not prove to be insurmountable. I think we should be more concerned about some of the things that we do rather than what we do not do, things that very much affect the working man, or for that matter all Canadians. I think we are aiming at a certain class in our society—it is not quite a classless society yet—in the allowances that are provided for working mothers, in the deduction of unemployment contributions, something quite new, and in

[Mr. Danson.]

raising basic exemptions, which I think will give fundamental relief. What we are looking at is the process of examining our tax structure, and the hon. member's notice of motion, I think, should be given very serious consideration.

This is a new thing for us. Although white papers themselves are old, the way they are being used now is a departure from past practice, and I think a very healthy one. It gives the government an opportunity to present proposals without being locked into legislation, thus putting the government in a position of not having to defend those proposals quite as tightly. It gives those most affected by them the chance to respond, so that there is a dimension, a balance, a greater reality when the legislation finally comes into being.

This is not the first white paper. There was a white paper on Indian affairs, one on veterans affairs, one on housing and one on anti-dumping. All of them were very helpful. The hon. member mentioned a white paper, and I assume he is referring to the one on tax reform, which is just one of many. But a white paper is a process to which we must respond. It is a process that challenges us all very much. It is also disturbing. It is disturbing to us as politicians because it makes us work harder; we have to try to deal with the immense amount of work it generates. It is disturbing to the public, because it makes people think about legislation, something they have never had to do before. It is a process that I think contributes to good government. I am convinced it is democratic. I am not sure it is good politics, because people used not to like to be disturbed, or challenged, or asked for their ideas. Nowadays, our young people do. They want to be involved. This is a departure that I hope will work well for future legislation.

● (5:20 p.m.)

I could not help but be impressed by a statement of Mr. Malcolm Davidson of the Ontario Federation of Agriculture. He said:

If they (the government) don't listen to our constructive proposals, then they've thrown away participatory democracy. But if we act hysterically, then we've thrown it away in advance.

So, this gives us an opportunity to reflect about the effect of legislation such as is before us this afternoon. Perhaps we have chosen something which is too complex in respect of tax reform. The Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau), in speaking in Toronto, referred to an old German saying something