

Excise Tax Act

(d) a fisherman, hunter or trapper for commercial fishing, hunting or trapping,

(e) a person under conditions for which relief from the consumption or sales tax is provided by virtue of any provision of this Act other than subsection 27(2), or

(f) a person within a class of persons exempt from tax under Part I of the *Income Tax Act*,

Mr. Speaker, all those people being exempted, what have we left? We have the small consumer! He is the one who has to leave home by car, because he has to drive 25, 30, 50 miles to work. There may be some who use that individual means of transportation excessively when they could easily use public transportation, or even from car pools with their colleagues. But one thing for sure, a good deal of workers have to drive to work and are therefore particularly affected by that measure.

So, when the minister wishes to lower gasoline consumption by increasing prices, in my opinion he is just mocking people, he is trying to bypass the real issue since by striking thus at the small consumer he is just adding fuel to inflation, adding to the production problems of our country, and in fact making matters worse. And when the major argument of the minister is the need for uniform prices, I wonder why uniformity can only mean increase in that case.

Since prices can be levelled through a reduction, why should an increase be necessary to level them? The problem, Mr. Speaker, should be solved realistically and the following questions should be asked: If we have oil in Canada, how much does it cost? We have some underground and it is a gift of providence. We only have to develop it. How much does it cost? When the developers and the provinces which are lucky enough to have some in their area have obtained a reasonable return, what is the cost of a gallon of gas? This is what the government must determine. If the cost price is 60 cents it should be sold 60 cents. If the cost price is 75 cents, sell it 75 cents. If it is 30 cents, sell it 30 cents. This makes economic sense. Since an inventory of oil resources is denied to us, how can we appreciate the conditions when the facts which we need to determine whether an increase is warranted are systematically concealed from us.

In other words, Mr. Speaker, such an increase seems to me entirely inexcusable. The objectives of the minister will surely not be attained. He has merely aggravated economic conditions which were not very promising to begin with. I can then recommend only one thing to the minister: let him come back once and for all to basing his budget on real, logical economic principles, principles that take no account of factors in no way related to the real economy. Let the minister ask himself what capacity for production the country has, what material potential is available to him, and then let him determine costs by giving each and everyone the income he needs to buy the goods that are essential to life.

Mr. Speaker, as long as our government does not understand those rudiments, every year we will end up by getting bills providing for increases under pretexts which, to my mind, are false. I should like to conclude by saying that rather than being faced with this type of bill, I would prefer the provinces negotiated the sale of oil amongst themselves; I am sure Quebec could do so, directly, with

[Mr. Matte.]

Alberta, for instance, and end up buying oil at a lower price than it has to pay at the present time.

So the role of the federal government becomes unjustifiable because the goal cannot be reached. It is clear that gas consumption will in no way be reduced because of the increase, just as it is obvious that a uniform price throughout the country will only be obtainable when people become logical, that is when Canadian products will be consumed exclusively in Canada. And when the minister says he intends to import as well as export petroleum, the situation becomes ridiculous, and control over uniform prices wished by all Canadians will be possible only when the problem of importing and exporting petroleum products shall have been solved.

● (1730)

[English]

Mr. Ron Huntington (Capilano): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to take part in this debate on Bill C-66, and I would like to put my remarks in the context of my background, which is agriculture and the entrepreneurial world of business. These two aspects of Canadian life are the part of Canada that grows from a productive and disciplined effort. They are a way of life which requires thrift, a work ethic, an ability to pay for your own mistakes. To survive, a business enterprise has to earn a profit, and profits after tax become capital. New capital is a new national and enterprise resource.

Between now and the turn of the century this country will need much new capital if we are to meet the social challenge that is before us. The opportunities within this country go to those with an ability to create new capital. As I said, to come from the business and farm community one has to have respect for thrift, respect for the work effort, respect for law and order, and respect for the sense of fair play and for the quality with which a business enterprise serves man and the community.

To survive in this increasingly complex society a business has to serve people well, it has to serve its customers, and we are starting to see that with new legislation being imposed on that community it has to serve its employees well and it has to serve its suppliers well. The volume of legislation that the government has been imposing on the community since 1968 is causing an unproductive burden to that community and is interfering in many respects with our ability to create capital for the challenge ahead.

The volume of amendments to legislation and regulations is actually destroying the decision making base for the private enterprise sector of this country.

The patchwork nature of budgets by successive finance ministers has really done a job of destroying and neutralizing this decision making base that once was a powerful factor in Canadian business life. Not only has the government added a costly and unproductive administrative burden to the industrial sectors of Canada with all this legislation, it has created so much unco-ordinated legislation that its own administrative sectors are breaking down.

I was rather surprised, in the work of the Public Accounts Committee this year, to find that within the public accounts we have hundreds of millions of dollars in