

*Excise Tax*

field of provincial concern. This aggravates or increases some of the grievances of the provinces about confederation.

Finally, I believe the 8 per cent tax is wrong because it discriminates against western provinces. It is a tax on gas and oil. Therefore, it is a tax on Alberta and Saskatchewan primarily, but also, to a lesser degree, on the province of British Columbia. If we are to have a special tax on the production of gas and oil in those two provinces, what about a special tax on the production of mineral resources such as nickel, copper, lead and zinc which come from other parts of Canada? What about some equity in the federal system?

I make an appeal today especially to Liberal party members sitting across from me to try to make them understand that the feeling of grievance and discontent in western Canada is strong and growing.

I do not stand here today to try to sound an alarm, but I do want to try to warn hon. members across the way that there are problems in the west and that policies such as these are responsible for making more and more western Canadians alienated from the very country in which they live. It is not just this confrontive federalism, this federalism of confrontation, this fight between governments—between Alberta and Ottawa, Saskatchewan and Ottawa or British Columbia and Ottawa; it is now a fight between the people of the country.

The ordinary people in my part of Canada are becoming more and more concerned about the role they are playing in confederation. I refer to *The Globe and Mail* of a week ago today, May 21. On the front page there is an article which I think all members should study. The headline reads "Alienation in West on rise, poll shows." It is an article concerning a public opinion poll commissioned by the Canada West Foundation, a very well known and highly respected group in western Canada which is partially funded by the four provincial governments. A poll was taken by this organization to find out how western Canadians felt about our country and to determine what kind of perceptions we have about Canada and its future. It followed a poll which was taken by this same group last October, right after the announcement of the constitutional resolution and the National Energy Program. The poll showed in almost all instances that alienation in the west is increasing.

● (1650)

The following statement was put to western Canadians:

Western Canadians get so few benefits from being part of Canada that they might as well go it on their own.

Some 36 per cent of westerners agreed with that statement; 36 per cent of our people said: "We get so few benefits we might as well consider going it on our own." Last October, 28 per cent agreed with that statement and now 36 per cent do so.

That kind of statistic terrifies me. I think it should also terrify the government and should motivate it in the name of Canada and in the name of unity to have all of us stick together in one state, to find out why western Canadians feel that they are discriminated against. I think the government knows we want to stay in Canada; that is what the west wants.

All over the west there are many people who are loyal to our country, who fought in two great wars under the flag of this country and who want to have this country stay together.

In the same poll people were asked bluntly whether or not they wanted to separate. Some 88 per cent of those polled said: "No, we want to stay in Canada." Last October 90 per cent of those polled replied in that way. On the other hand, there is a small minority of people who want to set up a separate state. Some 7 per cent of those polled said: "Let us have a separate country". Some 3 per cent said; "Let us join the United States." And 53 per cent of the people polled said that they have more in common in their hearts with the United States than they have with the people of central and eastern Canada.

So it is my purpose today to sound a warning to this House that, if we do not start to take some of the grievances in the west seriously, there may be a movement in western Canada which will be very hard to stop, which may start to snowball.

In many ways the atmosphere found in the west today is similar to that found in Quebec 20 years ago when we saw the increasing alienation of the Québécois to the rest of the country. Some people pooh-pooed this and said: "They are just a bunch of fanatics; they will never succeed. If we do not take them seriously and if we continue on with the status quo, or perhaps tinker here and there and make just a few reforms, then separatism in Quebec will be absolutely dead."

In the province of Quebec last year there was a referendum in which 40 per cent of the people voted yes to a question which, in essence, would have constituted a signal leading Quebecers toward an independent state. There is a great difference between the motivation for independence in Quebec and the motivation in Quebec for a different arrangement in this country than there is in western Canada. But there are also many similarities. There are similarities in the way that people feel about the country, both in the west and in Quebec. People feel that we are not equal partners or equal participants with the other parts of the country. If we do not address these problems and if impositions are made on western Canada without consultation or representation from the west, then there might be an independence movement which, once it got going, would be like a snowball or a prairie fire—very difficult to stop.

Members opposite should take my plea seriously and eliminate the 8 per cent tax, or at least change it so that it is not a discriminatory tax against the people of western Canada. I feel that very strongly, Mr. Speaker. I feel very strongly that this 8 per cent tax is not something in isolation but is part of an over-all plan by the federal government to reduce its deficit by reorganizing many of the institutions and programs which we have in our country today. It is a move away from co-operative federalism. In that kind of federalism you sit down and come up with a compromise and consensus between the provinces and the centre. What we see is a move toward confrontative federalism where impositions are placed on the regions.

We have seen that the constitutional resolution takes powers away from the provinces and gives them to the courts. This was done against the wishes of the four provinces in the west