

Federal Sales Tax

Surely no civilized society, and I think no Party in this place, will plead it is so hard up for dollars that it has to chisel on them. It is just not necessary. It does not amount to enough to upset or cause outrage or do violence to a Government's fiscal or monetary policy.

It means that this Parliament says that they are special people. That is all. They are special and they will receive special consideration. If we unanimously have to argue in favour of that special consideration, fine. But I make my point again that it should not be necessary. There need not be any debate or argument about it. I would urge that there be a unanimous voice vote now to pass this motion. We can then go out, have a sandwich, resume the debate at seven o'clock, and maybe have a 25 minute break. I want to assure my hon. friend if he wants to speak—

Mr. Boudria: Yes, I do.

Mr. Benjamin: Bless his heart. I hope he does not take any longer than I do. I think this question could be put. It could pass unanimously and then it would be on the Government's head. We have had this kind of discussion every year since I have been here. It is neither necessary nor needed. I urge the House to accept this motion as quickly as possible and then let us see what happens with it.

[Translation]

Mr. Don Boudria (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell): Mr. Speaker, it gives me pleasure today to take part in this debate on Motion 72 standing in the name of the Hon. Member for Nepean—Carleton (Mr. Tupper).

[English]

The motion presented to us is indeed very worthy of our support. I am quite pleased, as one Member, to give it my full endorsement. The motion to provide a reduction in sales tax for disabled persons is something which governments should have done quite some time ago as suggested to us by our colleague, the Hon. Member for Regina West (Mr. Benjamin).

[Translation]

Mr. Speaker, it is too bad that the Minister of Finance (Mr. Wilson) does not read the *Orders of the Day*, because if he did, he would have known that his colleague, the Hon. Member for Nepean—Carleton, wanted to move such a motion, and he would presumably have taken into account the suggestions of his own colleague in preparing the pile of documents which were tabled last week supposedly as a tax reform and which we all recognized as a Budget of the Conservative Party.

[English]

One of the elements introduced in this budget of last week, which is called a White Paper by the Minister of Finance (Mr. Wilson), is yet new taxes that affect a large number of Canadians, including the disabled. I give you an example of what I am referring to, Mr. Speaker. There is a tax proposed in last week's budget called tax reform which will affect in a very particular and dramatic way rural Canadians. It is, in

fact, a tax on rural Canada. I say to my colleague, the Hon. Member for Nepean—Carleton (Mr. Tupper), who I respect very much, that the tax proposed by the Minister of Finance on telecommunications is having a serious effect on rural and disabled people. This new telecommunications tax which has been brought forward is a tax on rural Canada. Here is why, Mr. Speaker.

The tax presented by the Minister of Finance is outlined in the little paper I have here in my hand which says:

Extending the sales tax to telecommunications services at a rate of 10 per cent; the basic service charge for a private residential line will be exempt from this 10 per cent tax.

If you live in a rural area, the basic service is about \$5 or \$6 a month—somewhere in that neighborhood—depending on the area in which you live. If you live in an urban area, you pay approximately \$15 or \$20 for the basic telephone service. If you live in an urban area, say greater Ottawa or Montreal, you can phone approximately one million Canadian citizens without paying any long distance charges at all. For handicapped people who cannot get out, there is a method of access which is not there for others. But what if you live in the rural part of my riding or in the rural part of the riding of the Member for Nepean—Carleton? I think it would be the same in his case as it is in my riding.

Let me use the example of a farmer, which example could also apply to a handicapped person. The farmer may have a telephone in his home and one in the barn. Because only the basic service is tax exempt, the extra line in the barn is taxed. If he has a private line, which is extra in a rural area, that too is taxed. In a rural area you have to pay an additional amount of money. I believe it is in the order of \$2 for every quarter mile from the nearest village to where you live if you have a private line. The cost of that private line is taxed under the measure introduced last week.

● (1840)

I was speaking with a group of farmers last weekend and they told me that their telephone bills are in the order of \$75 per month in rural areas. Of that, \$5 will be tax exempt and the other \$70 will be taxed. This tax applies only to rural Canadians, and it applies in a most unfortunate way.

Mr. James: Seventy-five-dollar telephone bill?

Mr. Boudria: I think a Tory is heckling from across the way, but it is probably irrelevant. The Hon. Member across the way says that farmers do not pay \$75 monthly telephone bills. I would like the record to show that the Hon. Member indicates that that is not so and that is fine. All rural Canadians who have to pay those fees will know the view of the Government. If government Members want rural Canadians to be taxed to death, that is fine. That is their opinion, but it is not mine.

Mr. James: I'm a farmer and I know what farmers pay.