

And because we were very serious about this issue, we presented two amendments. First of all, I want to express my profound regret that the Government Members on the parliamentary committee refused to accept those amendments. We, in the Opposition, had opened the door to a compromise by presenting an initial amendment prohibiting the discounting of child tax credits. This amendment was to have been complemented by another amendment that would have given the Minister a chance to choose the right time to adopt the Bill.

Mr. Speaker, now we all know the truth about the tax rebate discounting industry. We know that only 11 per cent of their clients earn \$20,000 or more. The Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs and Canada Post (Mr. Côté) says that he wants to ensure this consumer group has a choice. I think he is referring to the group that earns more than \$20,000, because how can anyone claim that people earning \$20,000 or less can see the loss of a substantial sum of money as an alternative?

The problem, the real problem is with the time it takes to process income tax returns from those in the low-income bracket.

This Bill does not do anything about that, yet the Hon. Member for Wellington-Dufferin-Simcoe (Mr. Beatty), who was supposed to change everything during his mandate at Revenue Canada, did not do anything at all to improve the situation in that respect. More significant still, the Bill does not deal with Canada's ever worsening poverty problem. In fact, the proposed measures will only take more money out of the pockets of the most needy Canadians. We deeply regret the fact that our country is witnessing the further impoverishment of its most destitute citizens, whereas the Government is trying to help shaky financial institutions with an ardour which, had it been applied to the discounting problem, would have led to a much more constructive and much more equitable solution.

The coincidence of the two measures we are forced to adopt today reveals the true face of the Conservatives: on one hand, generosity towards wealthy bank depositors and, on the other, stinginess towards the poorest families in this country. For instance, the Government did not hesitate to abolish quotas on shoes, thereby eliminating many thousands of jobs in Canada to please a few major import companies, but then it simply will not abolish tax discounting, which indeed would benefit Canada's most destitute families.

There is a second amendment which would enable the clients of discounters to pay no more than \$75 for this service. In other words, we are proposing that this \$75 ceiling be enforced. I would also like to express my regret about the fact that this amendment was defeated in committee. My only satisfaction, Mr. Speaker, is that a Government Member did support our amendment. I hope that now the Government has a last chance to adopt at least two decent amendments to make the legislation more acceptable, it will take advantage of this opportunity to let the neediest families in Canada have the full

Tax Rebate Discounting Act

amount to which they are entitled, because this money is actually an income tax overpayment. The full sum should go back to them, to pay for clothing or furniture or dental bills for a child or another family member. Since the Government has once again demonstrated it is oblivious to the plight of the neediest in our society, I would invite them, now we are getting ready for Christmas, to show the neediest in our society they have some heart and some generosity and accept these two amendments.

[English]

Mr. Bill Domm (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs and Canada Post): Mr. Speaker, I am sure the Hon. Member for Papineau (Mr. Ouellet) will agree with me that the changes which we have made to the child tax credit have little to do with our national footwear industry.

I would also point out, in contradiction to one of the statements made by the Hon. Member, that what we are trying to do with respect to Bill C-83 is two things. First, we are trying to address the needs of the needy and not remove the service from those who need it most. At the same time, we are realizing that there is a service supplied by the discounters. It is not merely a commission or an interest paid. If that were the case the banks would be performing this service. I suggest to the Hon. Member that the banks are not in the least bit interested in supplying this service.

I would also remind the Hon. Member that it was his Government, the former Liberal Government, which introduced tax discounting. It did this for the purpose of supplying a need to the needy. Unlike that administration, in comparison with this administration, the turn-around time from the time of filing to the time of receipt is much less now than it was under the former administration. The Minister says: *comme ci, comme ça*, but I remind him that the time in some cases is as little as four and one half weeks if filed on time and with the proper information.

● (1650)

I would also like to ask the Hon. Member to think about what would happen if he was in the money lending business, January 15 rolled around, he wanted to get his money in advance and he was offered a rate of 1 per cent or \$75, which the Minister suggests is the maximum for discounters, and the amount which was to be received by that client looking for money in advance was \$900. Would he lend \$900 at 1 per cent or \$75 for up to three months? We must be realistic and we must appreciate the fact that when the money is requested from the discounter on January 15, it is physically impossible, since we do not even turn on the computers until February, to refund that money within a four-week period. Therefore, what the discounter is doing is preparing the income tax form for a fee. In addition to that, he is charging what we consider to be a more reasonable rate because of these amendments. We recognize the need for that service, as did the former Government. The only thing we are saying is that it needs to be less because of the shorter turn-around period.