

Excise Tax Act

I understand that the amount of revenue which the government derives directly and indirectly from the automobile business is astronomical. Everyone knows that the average cost in taxes, licences and so on, to the owner of a motor vehicle is around \$107. This data was collected in 1958, and I expect it applies equally in 1960. When you consider that the total registration of automobiles is around five million in Canada, that represents a total of \$535 million which the operators of these motor vehicles pay the government annually for the privilege of driving. I am not taking into account all the taxes that are included in the retail price of the automobile.

The excise tax is a form of tax which the government levies in order to derive revenue for the purpose of carrying on the business of the nation. We all understand the necessity for taxation. It is here to stay as long as we live. In fact, we pay taxes not only when we are born but when we die. One needs only to inquire into the cost of a funeral to find out what it costs to die. In any event, Mr. Speaker, I hope you will let me say that the excise tax on automobiles is not only discriminatory because the automobile is the only major commodity subject to special tax but also because the employees of the automobile industry are the losers.

Mr. Speaker: Perhaps the hon. member misunderstood me. I indicated that it did not appear to me to be beyond the proper scope of debate to complain that this bill should have included other taxes. However, if the hon. member proposes to debate one specific tax, for instance the sales tax on automobiles, he would then, in effect, be discussing a section of the bill that relates to that tax and would not be illustrating the restrictiveness of this bill.

I appreciate that there is some difficulty in applying a rule of that kind but it can be applied and it has been applied; and it is left to the good sense of the hon. members of the house to make sure that remarks in that category—that is, remarks about matters which have been left out of the bill—are general ones. It seems to me that the hon. member is using the privilege of procedure at this time by going into detail on this specific item. I would ask him to come back to the general discussion of it.

Mr. Badanai: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am not thinking of doing anything except to respect your ruling. Therefore in a general way I say that the Excise Tax Act amendments as presented by the Minister of Finance (Mr. Fleming) are, in my judgment, inadequate. They will not meet the requirements of the Canadian people at the moment. May I give this as an example? I am not now

referring to the automobile business because I have already said something about that matter. But inasmuch as the act mentions indirectly bottling works, may I say that we have in Canada bottling manufacturers who at the present moment are handicapped by the sales tax of 11 per cent. It is estimated that if relieved of the sales tax each of the approximately 575 bottling plants in Canada might employ three or four additional persons, making a total of between 1,600 and 2,200 men who could be lifted from the unemployment rolls by this particular industry. The removal of this particular tax is not included. In other words, I am merely suggesting a beneficial move that could be made by the government and which it has the power to make, in order to relieve the Canadian people from some unjust action and at the same time to make it possible for a number of employers to give employment to a greater number of people who are now on the relief rolls or are drawing unemployment insurance. I am sure the Minister of Labour (Mr. Starr) will be only too glad to know that certain excise tax changes would bring about a beneficial result in connection with the entire unemployment situation.

There are a number of things about which I should like to speak in connection with the Excise Tax Act amendment which are not included in this bill unfortunately but conclusions can be drawn from the fact that they are absent. That is one of the reasons why it was my intention to point out the omission. It is not always fair just to point out what is in. Sometimes it is important to know what the omissions are and what they could mean to the communities across Canada. I should like to ask the minister, if and when he considers it appropriate to do so, to bring in some amendments which are not included in this bill to amend the Excise Tax Act and which would reduce or eliminate the tax on automobiles. That is one of the things that is really of great importance to the automobile industry in general and to the people in Canada, in particular those who are working in the automobile plants. I have no doubt that the minister is acquainted with the submission made by the greater Windsor industrial commission in a brief prepared for consumption—

Mr. Speaker: It seems to me that the hon. member is disregarding entirely the direction I have given to him. If he has not some other submission to make which is relevant, I suggest that he resume his seat.

Mr. Badanai: I shall conclude, Mr. Speaker, by merely expressing a hope that the minister will take to heart some of the things that I have been attempting to say notwithstanding