

Excise Tax Act

I hope the Minister of Finance can find it in his heart to reconsider this measure and remember the effect it will have on the poor of this country, on our pensioners, on our unemployed and on our low income earners. I say this to the Minister of Finance: if he wants to salvage what little there is left of his reputation, which has suffered badly because of this disastrous budget, he will put this bill over to the fall, reconsider it and, hopefully, after having reconsidered it, have the heart to withdraw it.

Mrs. Iona Campagnolo (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development): Mr. Speaker, I am grateful for the opportunity to take part in the debate on Bill C-66, an act to amend the Excise Tax Act, and on the amendment to this bill introduced by the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Stanfield).

The amendment to this bill which seeks to delay its introduction for six months is a most significant one. It tells us a great deal about the policies of those who support it. The most charitable description I can think of is that it represents the ostrich school of political thought—"Don't do anything to solve the problem; just stick your head in the sand for six months and maybe it will go away."

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mrs. Campagnolo: I remind hon. members that the voters of Canada looked at that ostrich just over one year ago and proclaimed it a dead duck. They elected, instead, a government which would provide leadership and was not afraid to tackle serious issues, even if it meant taking some unpopular steps.

● (2040)

I am confident, as a new resident of at least five days a week in this province, that the voters of Ontario will vote similarly this fall and replace the big, blue ostrich of Queen's Park with a progressive and forward-looking bright red Liberal bird, of substance, thought, and good government.

Some hon. Members: Hear, Hear!

Mrs. Campagnolo: The Leader of the Opposition admits that we have a serious problem to face in ensuring a continued supply of energy for Canadians at a realistic price, but from there his policies seem to hesitate and slow down like the pace of a turgid river.

He does not approve of the excise tax, but he does not want to increase income taxes. Nor does he want to increase government debt. Yet he is in favour of a single-price system for petroleum products as long as we who are supposedly thought of in intellectual metropolitan Tory circles as "nasty" westerners do not feel too badly about subsidizing the Atlantic provinces.

No wonder he wants to hide his head in the sand for six months. In his position I think I would be tempted to keep it there until some time early next February.

I think that all Canadians, with the possible exception of big blue ostriches, realize that we face in the months ahead some very serious and very difficult decisions about the future, and particularly the future of our energy sup-

[Mr. McGrath.]

plies—where they are to come from, how we are to obtain them, and then how we are to pay for them. Our known petroleum reserves are diminishing at our current rate of consumption, doing so steadily during the next ten years. Our untapped resources can only be obtained at a price much higher than that we are now used to paying, or perhaps even willing to pay.

We will pay more for oil and gas in the future. That is an irreversible fact, a simple statement of demand and supply, and not a sinister plot of Leninist communism, as the hon. member for Pembina (Mr. Elzinga) would have us believe.

However, since the parliamentary guide says he has 274 Leninists in his own constituency, I must assume he knows whereof he speaks, so I bow to the hon. gentleman from Pembina in his definition of Leninists, though I must confess I laugh out loud at the thought that he considers the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) a Leninist or the Minister of Finance (Mr. Turner) a communist.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mrs. Campagnolo: The hon. member for Waterloo-Cambridge (Mr. Saltsman) ought to know and, if he read the budget, so should my hon. friend from Pembina know that this is a stringent right-leaning budget geared to tough times. The question of oil and gas prices is one which is critical to our country's future as a major industrial nation, and I wish to commend the Minister of Finance and his colleagues in the federal cabinet for having the political integrity to face this problem now, and for their leadership in determining to resolve it while it is still only a problem, and not waiting for it to become a flaming crisis in this nation, as the ostriches would have us do.

Mr. Elzinga: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. The hon. member for Skeena (Mrs. Campagnolo) is usually correct in what she says in this House. However, there are two areas which she mentioned here that are incorrect. I would like them corrected for the record. I did not refer to the Minister of Finance (Mr. Turner) as a communist. Nor did I refer to the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) as a Leninist. I said the Prime Minister followed the teachings of Lenin.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mrs. Campagnolo: Mr. Speaker, I do not see any point of order in that. However, the facts are clear in the parliamentary guide book. Marxist, Leninist and communist candidates ran in the hon. member's constituency. I bow to him with all the grace I can muster in his knowledge of Leninists.

The question of oil and gas prices is critical to this country's future. I was saying, when I was interrupted, not by the hon. member for Pembina (Mr. Elzinga) I hasten to add, but by some outcries from the opposite side, that ostriches are notably quiescent and tranquil. They are big birds, but they are seldom noted for their brightness.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mrs. Campagnolo: This tax is an unpopular one, and this legislation is not popular legislation. Paying taxes is never popular. But the real test of leadership is the ability