

Excise

discriminating against the owners of boats and motors, compared with the tax on luxury or heavy cars weighing over 4,500 pounds. This is something I cannot rationalize. How even the most stupid official in the minister's department could figure this to be fair, I do not know. These cars are used 12 months in the year. In my own case, I drive a heavy car because it is necessary for me to drive 500 miles a week to return home, and I will be paying this tax. My car has already been driven 48,000 miles. I also have a boat that qualifies for the tax, but I do not think I have put 100 gallons of gas into the tank in the last two years. This just shows how absolutely ridiculous the situation is.

Mention has been made of the tax on private aircraft, and the situation has been well presented by several of my colleagues as well as colleagues from across the way. Again, this tax is unfair and I hope the minister will reconsider it. I see his parliamentary secretary sitting with an official. I hope they are going to do something about this. The important thing is to cancel the tax entirely and to get the money from some other area. Another factor that increases the price of a boat is that every province, outside of the great province of my friend from Calgary, to my right, has a sales tax. I checked with certain boat companies at the Toronto international show and learned that governments are making about twice as much on a boat as the manufacturer and the dealer's commission. For example, the average sized cruiser costing \$19,500 carries a federal tax of about \$3,200. Pretty nice, I say. Then there is the applicable provincial sales tax on top of that. A smaller boat costs \$10,900, with a \$1,900 federal tax. You would think that the government was in the boat building business, judging from the profit they make on boats.

Again I suggest this is an unfair tax, that it is too high. My hon. friend, the parliamentary secretary, who himself represents a riding in the "little" province of Ontario where there are a few boats indeed right on his doorstep, I am sure deep down agrees with me 100 per cent. I hope he will use his good offices to tell the "honourable John" and company, and, more important, those grand mandarins, that they are away off base in this case and that they should sniff around for the money in some other field.

Mr. Firth: Mr. Chairman, I should like to make a few remarks on this excise tax bill and add to some of the comments made by members on both sides who have shown a lot of opposition to the tax on boats, private aircraft, outboard motors, motorized toboggans, and so on. I have listened to the remarks of members on all sides of the House and have heard nothing but opposition—and very well spoken words of opposition—to this bill. In fact, I have yet to hear anyone speak in favour of this particular tax, and with that in mind I should like to serve notice of two amendments that I wish to propose to the bill.

At this point perhaps I might read them into the record. My first amendment is that Bill C-40 be amended on page 11, line 24, by deleting therefrom the word "two" and substituting therefor the word "seven". My second amendment is that Bill C-40 be amended on page 11 by inserting in line 28, immediately after the word "Canada", the words "or boats purchased or imported by hunters, trappers, fishermen or prospectors residing north of the sixtieth parallel of latitude". I should like to address my

[Mr. Darling.]

remarks to these two amendments, as well as to reconfirm the wishes of, I think, a large number of people in this country, including members on all sides of the House, regarding the high energy use tax, the tax on small boats, private aircraft and other small vehicles, use of which is especially made in isolated areas of this country.

I do not accept completely the term "north" as being 100 miles north of the United States border. I think we have to choose a point a little farther north than that. There are isolated communities in all provinces where people have to depend on small boats and where the only means of outside communication is small aircraft. Use of small, privately registered aircraft normally is not a luxury, no matter how you look at it. Very few people in the northern part of this country use a small aircraft as a luxury item. Small businessmen use such aircraft to transport a small amount of goods as well as themselves. For the missionary who uses an aircraft in certain parts of the country, it is the only means of transportation.

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There are farmers in that part of the country who control their wheat fields with small aircraft and use small aircraft for seeding. They can seed in this way much more economically and faster than with ordinary machinery. There are police forces who must use registered aircraft to do their work. There are ranchers, people who run large ranches, who use small, privately registered aircraft to patrol the ranches, and so on. There are hydro companies and provincial governments, as well as the federal government itself, which use small aircraft. In fact, the federal government uses them to move ministers across the country; therefore, the government knows the value of and the need for privately registered aircraft. If it is not right for the small businessman to use aircraft for the running of his business, then it is not right for the government to do so. There are hydro companies which use aircraft for patrolling their power lines, and in some cases they use privately registered aircraft for stringing out their lines. In the isolated communities in the northern parts of the provinces, and particularly in the Northwest Territories, this is a very important part of the communication and transportation systems.

Therefore, I am firmly convinced that this piece of legislation is very badly presented and I am glad that a large number of members from both sides of the House have expressed opposition to this measure. I certainly hope that after the minister has heard the number of people who oppose this tax on high energy small boats and privately registered aircraft, he will take it upon himself, being the minister responsible, to revoke this tax and will, as my friend just mentioned, try to raise the \$30 million from another source. It is certainly not a just measure no matter how you look at it.

For example, I could fly from Yellowknife to Fort Smith, or drive a car. If I were going by car, I would have to travel on a gravel highway for approximately six hours. It would be a long drive of about 500 or 600 miles on the existing gravel highway. But if I travelled by my small aircraft, I would be at my destination in one hour and 20 minutes and I would burn less than half the gas that I would use if I travelled by car. There are many arguments in favour of dropping this tax. I certainly hope the govern-