

Adjournment Debate

TAXATION

Again, according to one of these television reports that I happened to see called *Current Affairs*, the general, the warlord, is a United States taxpayer and he purchased a house in California as far back as 1983. On the other hand, the warlord's wife who is in Toronto is a refugee claimant who, along with her four children, is living in a three bedroom subsidized apartment receiving welfare in the amount of some \$1,700 a month from Canadian taxpayers. Again according to these reports the Canadian refugee claimant in Toronto who is apparently here because she fears for her life if she ever returned to Somalia did in fact return to Somalia and visited her husband, the warlord, for about a four-month period, all the while collecting and continuing to collect welfare in Canada. While in Somalia this Canadian refugee claimant was recorded by reporters there making speeches and campaigning to keep the United Nations out of Somalia.

• (1810)

Is it any wonder at all that my constituents and I in fact ask the minister why in the name of heaven our tax dollars are being spent this way. Is this perhaps another Al-Mashat case? Why is it that somebody like this cannot be sent back, deported immediately without any further delay?

Can the minister really guarantee all Canadians, as he tried to when I asked this question in the House, absolutely and unequivocally that the new law, Bill C-86, is going to prevent this sort of thing from ever happening again? Let us hear from the minister tonight. All Canadians are interested in hearing the answers.

Mr. Jack Shields (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Employment and Immigration): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member as a former cabinet minister should be aware and I am sure is aware that privacy legislation prevents the government from commenting on a specific case in a public forum. He knows that. He is making cheap political hay with something he is much better equipped than to do.

The member is also aware if there are allegations made against persons in Canada regarding their immigration status, these are investigated by immigration officials.

With regard to the allegations concerning welfare fraud, I can only say to my hon. friend that it falls under the jurisdiction of municipal and provincial authorities.

Mr. Robert D. Nault (Kenora—Rainy River): Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to follow up on the question I asked on February 10 which relate to grants in lieu of taxes.

The freeze announced on December 2, 1992 in the economic statement was done without prior consultation with Canadian municipalities. Most municipalities had already established their 1993 budgets. The freeze will mean to these municipalities \$80 million in lost tax revenues for municipal coffers. Obviously that means municipal taxpayers will be on the hook for those lost revenues.

The Federation of Canadian Municipalities recognizes that something needs to be done in order to address the rapid increase in grants in lieu of taxes. Of course the argument is that since 1987 the cost of the grants in lieu of taxes to the federal government have gone from \$215 million to \$438 million in 1992.

Any changes in how grants in lieu of taxes are calculated must be done in consultation with the municipalities. In the meantime I would like to see the government remove the freeze and lift the unnecessary burden on Canadian municipalities until the whole issue of the restructuring of the formula and the problems that this formula is creating as far as the federal government is concerned are addressed.

In the House the Minister of State for Finance and Privatization suggested that was not what the municipalities wanted. Of course he was misinformed. I would like to clear the record by reading the press release by the Federation of Canadian Municipalities:

The Federation of Canadian Municipalities will continue to press the federal government to lift the freeze on its share of municipal taxes applicable to federal property.

The federal government has a legal and moral obligation to pay its fair share of taxes. The federal government has broken a 40-year tradition by arbitrarily imposing a freeze on grants in lieu of taxes. In the past the federal government resolved its difference with Canadian municipalities through consultation and negotiation. Further I would like to ask the government why it has not introduced legislation to amend the Municipal Grants Act when the department's own legal advice is that amendments will have to be made in order for the freeze to come into effect.