

Excise Tax Act

I suggest it would be much better to observe the proprieties of the situation and to compel the government—which seeks to obtain from this House, as the guardians of the public purse, certain taxing privileges—rigidly and completely to abide by the rules and regulations.

Mr. Speaker: As usual, hon. members have been most helpful in their interventions. Up to this point I might indicate that our researchers have developed a file which I now have in my hand. The arguments that have been presented today have, frankly, not done a single thing to resolve the matter in my mind. It has been left open since the first day of the argument, and it remains open. I take it, basically, that there is agreement with the method which has been employed in the bill and that it is within the general power given in the resolution. There is no doubt about that as it is left within the power which is provided for in the resolution.

The argument is not so much whether it is more—I should not say “more”, because “more” would certainly be out of order—or whether it is a taking of less power but, rather, that even if that is accepted, which seems generally to be the case in argument, it is so substantially different in language and in approach that it ought to be ruled out of order on the ground that it is not even based on the terms of the resolution. That is something to which I shall have to give further consideration. Hopefully, I will be able to deliver my ruling on this question later this day, perhaps at five o'clock or at 5.45. When I have determined that matter, I will see that the House leaders are advised as far in advance as possible.

Mr. Peter Elzinga (Pembina): Mr. Speaker, in speaking to the amendment put forward by the Leader of the Official Opposition (Mr. Stanfield), let me say that I cannot see how any reasonable person in this House could disagree with it. It brings to mind the statement of the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources (Mr. Macdonald) when we were discussing Petro-Canada, Bill C-8. Throughout that entire debate the minister stated that the main reason the bill was being brought forth was to ensure Canadians an adequate and reliable supply of energy at a reasonable price. Recent measures included in the budget, particularly this bill, have shown us just how concerned this government is about reliable supplies. There is nothing in this bill to spur development or aid the conservation of our oil products.

Recent measures have also shown us how concerned this government is about the supply of Canadian gasoline at reasonable prices. The 10-cent excise tax is going completely to the federal government. Let us ask the average Canadian if he feels that the 10-cent excise tax is a reasonable form of taxation. This tax measure alone will add at least one-half a percentage point to our consumer price index as estimated by Statistics Canada. Statistics Canada reported that consumer prices were up during June, the biggest increase in more than a year, and measures such as this bill make many Canadians wonder what concern this government has for the Canadian consumer.

● (1540)

Let us ask the Liberal-socialists, once again, how the Canadian people will profit from this measure. Let us remember a statement of Lenin's in which he said that the way to destroy the middle class is to crush it between the grindstones of taxation and inflation. That is just what this government is doing. The inadequacies, not only of this bill but of the many proposals put forward by this government, make me more and more aware each day that it does not have any positive solutions or policies to solve the problems of this country. Too many of the government's decisions reflect a strong tendency to put that which is expedient ahead of that which is basically sound from the long-term point of view. I believe it is time there was a restoration of ideals and principles to their rightful place in our national politics.

There is no policy in this bill. It has been stated that proposals such as this and Bill C-8 are part of an over-all policy, but we have not been told what the total package will be in respect of an energy policy. It is my feeling that this government wishes a total package of government ownership and socialism. Petro-Can is an example of this. Let us remember that social justice must not be mistaken for socialism or for welfarism, because they are two different things. Let us not think that socialists have a corner on compassion. Indeed, one thing I have noticed about them is that their compassion bears a marked relationship to their distance from an object and its source of funds and aid. They have great enthusiasm for public money going to foreign countries and wonderful projects, but they have somewhat less enthusiasm for private money going to individual Canadians. They are great at giving out money so long as it is the public's money, but we dare not touch their pocket.

My complaint is that those feelings of compassion have been smothered by years of state expansion until Canadians expect the state to do everything. We must have a policy based on returning the state to its proper function of serving the individual, and not the other way around. A socialist is one who thinks he knows all the answers. In fact, he thinks he knows even better than the individual himself what is best for the individual. I believe the government is doing exactly the same thing. He strives, just as the government strives, for complete government domination of the economy and believes that the government should own or at least control our most productive capital. It is called “public ownership”, or “belonging to the people”. These are great and woolly phrases.

Is it the intention of the government to destroy personal initiative? If so, the government certainly is going about it in the most effective way. I feel strongly this is what the government is doing; it is destroying personal initiative.

I wonder whether one can imagine the type of bureaucracy that will be needed to calculate the return of the ten cents to those who are exempt from this ten-cent excise tax. Contrary to the alleged philosophy, it is abundantly clear that the Liberal Party is involving the government more and more in practically every aspect of the lives of Canadians. Nor is there any shred of evidence which would indicate it intends to reduce this involvement. What I find to be the most insidious aspect of the dependency of so many on the largesse of the Liberal Party is