

Income Tax

a very serious crisis or an impending catastrophe succeeds in breaking up this deadlock. It is precisely a disaster of that sort which is facing the western world today. Prices in Canada have been going up steadily for the last 19 years. It was back in 1953 that we saw the consumer price index go down for the last time. Under the present pricing pattern, the public must assume all the production costs for a given period, while it should pay only for all the goods consumed during that same period. So, inflation is a legalized robbery which deprives elder people of their savings and an anticipated robbery of future generations since they will have to pay a price on capital which will have lost an equal value tomorrow. That is the situation which has to be changed as soon as possible.

● (2012)

[English]

Mr. F. A. Philbrook (Halton): Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity of speaking on Bill C-11. I am pleased to speak on this bill because I did not have an opportunity to speak during the throne speech debate. That is one of the difficulties of this House. However, I share with all the constituency of Halton the joy we had in having the Queen here for our opening ceremonies.

Second, I wish to congratulate the Minister of Finance (Mr. Chrétien) on his new post.

Mr. Hees: Apple polishing.

Mr. Philbrook: Anyone who knows this minister will agree that he has brought valuable qualities to the federal government, qualities of reason, discipline, and dedication. From what I and my constituents saw during his recent visit to my riding in Oakville and the nearby suburb of Toronto, he comes across to the public as not only a very popular but a very promising minister. I do not mean he just makes promises but shows promise.

I wish to consider this an economic statement, not a statement on the budget because this is what the minister did. In addition, it gives an opportunity to speak a little more broadly, rather than just on the budget. I wish to talk about what is important in the financing of this country, on the economic arrangements.

Mr. Hees: You have finished the first apple, now start on the second.

Mr. Philbrook: I hear a little noise coming from the other side. It is a little difficult to see who it is behind the gangster glasses.

I wish to begin with a few general and long-term comments. They are important in terms of orientation. If they are repetitious, it is because they need repeating.

A lot of people, businessmen in particular, feel that with this economic statement the minister is moving in the right direction. He is doing as much as is presently possible, given the very difficult circumstances under which he is operating. There is very little room to manoeuvre.

[Mr. Allard.]

The present position could be characterized as tax relief and incentives for both business and consumers. The important part is not what is being offered at present, but the fact that if the response is good and the economy begins to grow, as many are predicting, we should be following up with more of the same. This may seem a small step. However, it is the greatest step this minister could take for this country at the present time. Over a long period of time we have had one very clear inclination, that is, toward the social policies of this country during a period of very easy economic times. It now takes strong leadership to change that emphasis back to free enterprise, the private sector, making very difficult decisions and running a tight ship.

I think it was Tolstoy who said the longest journey starts with one small step. At least we are seeing that now. I think those in the official opposition will agree that this is the right emphasis; however, those in the other parties may not agree.

The emphasis for some time to come will be on working through the private sector, through free enterprise, not with the government running so many activities in this country. This was signalled in the white paper "The Way Ahead" of a few months ago. It started in the March, 1977, budget and is being confirmed by the removal of controls.

Many people, including myself, would like to have seen controls removed sooner. I am prepared to accept the argument that this may be a very difficult winter in many ways and we might have regretted taking off controls now. However, in terms of getting the economy rolling, it would have been preferable if they could have been removed this fall.

There is another problem that is as difficult as running the country. I refer to the old problem of communicating with the people. We do not seem to be able to share the facts and our mutual experiences with the people back home. We must work as hard at that as running this country. I say that, in spite of televising the proceedings in this House, although that is capable of being edited just like the newspapers. Even though we find we are able to conduct our business well, we still cannot seem to get this across. There are people who still wonder.

This morning I noticed an announcement by the Minister of National Health and Welfare (Miss Bégin) on a subject which is due to be raised again shortly, namely, a guaranteed annual income with accompanying tax credits, the so-called negative taxation and so on.

I suggest to the minister that we should at least make a start in three needy areas. There are the low-income workers, the one-parent families, and unemployed workers between 60 and 65. We know these are serious problems. We should be looking for some better way to support these people and give them reassurance. But if this is to be the main social plan in this country, many of us are worried about it being the main disincentive. We found we had trouble with all our programs, getting the wrong effect through disincentives and so on. I hope we can work this out before getting into a general social support program.