

Excise Tax Act

managed to marshal 15 or 16 speeches out of 16 NDP members, and I can assure the House and the hon. member for Peace River that we will be able to marshal more. However, over 60 Tories have not yet said a word.

Mr. Baldwin: Our members do not have to be marshalled; they do it voluntarily.

Mr. Benjamin: It is bad enough when some Liberal members get up and object and then vote for a bill.

An hon. Member: Be quiet; I want to read my newspaper.

Mr. Benjamin: The official opposition objected, and now they have chickened out. They sit around the lobby wondering when we will get home for a holiday, when we will get out of here.

Mr. Mazankowski: What a hypocrite. You cannot say that with a straight face.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please. I hesitate to interrupt the hon. member, but I must ask that he direct his remarks to the bill. The hon. member should follow the rule of relevancy and speak to the subject matter of the bill.

Mr. Benjamin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It may have only been a delusion, but I thought that my reference to the performance of the official opposition in the past 30 hours, and what it is likely to be in the next 30, might have encouraged them to take another look at their position and, if necessary, stay here for the rest of the summer in an effort to persuade this government to change its mind on the method of raising the \$525 million. I may have been out of order in expressing those remarks, but I thought they were germane to the matter of an iniquitous gasoline tax. I will leave it at that and try not to get into any more arguments with friends to my right. They can explain to their constituents why they allowed this legislation to pass so readily.

Mr. Hnatyshyn: We have fought it every bit as hard as you.

Mr. Benjamin: I will apologize to hon. members to my right if in committee of the whole they all get up and speak on every clause of this bill. If another 60 speak on third reading, I assure them we will make all the speeches we can.

Mr. Stanfield: You run your show and we will run ours.

● (1640)

Mr. Benjamin: The Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Stanfield) says they will run their show and we can run ours. I wish they would run a show. I wish they would put on a show, a serious effort.

Mrs. Holt: You would be a lousy actor.

Mr. Broadbent: Back to the curtains, Simma.

[Mr. Benjamin.]

Mr. Benjamin: This excise tax on gasoline applies to personal use only. What the minister forgets is that much of this personal use is from necessity. People have no other choice than to use their cars, whether it is an old age pensioner going to buy groceries, or a worker who has no alternative—

Mrs. Holt: Same old NDP line.

Mr. Benjamin:—but to use his car to drive to work. The minister counts this as personal use. This is unfair, because people in other segments of our society are entitled to rebates with respect to the use of their cars to drive to work. I do not know of any doctor or lawyer who takes a bus. They drive their cars and they are entitled to rebates. But the worker is not so entitled. Is this reasonable? Is it just?

This ten cents a gallon increase—it will eventually amount to 20 cents—will take away all the tax credit which taxpayers have been allowed over the past year or year and a half. It might take more. It will negate any future rebates to which they are entitled—\$150 or \$175, whatever it might be for 1976. Is this a proper manner in which to raise half a billion dollars, especially when there are nine or ten other ways in which it might be more fittingly done, ways which would be more readily accepted not only by this House but by the public generally? Surely the government will agree to scrap this legislation—

An hon. Member: Never!

Mr. Benjamin:—and devise a new way of raising the money. If they liked, they could call us back in a couple of weeks and we could pass the legislation in a few days. Or it could be the first item of business when the House returns. We could deal with it and pass it quickly. I, for one, would give a personal commitment not to delay it—not even to speak on it except perhaps to say a word or two of congratulation.

An hon. Member: You told us that when the pay raise came forward, too.

Mr. Benjamin: Why use this method when there are so many others available? What idiot convinced the Minister of Finance and the Minister of National Revenue (Mr. Basford) that this was the best way to raise the money? Whoever accepted it must realize by now that he accepted bad advice and that the government is using a bad method. Surely ministers opposite can come back to the House with alternative legislation to accomplish the same end, a bill which would have the support of the House and of the people across the country.

Mr. Gordon Towers (Red Deer): Mr. Speaker, while waiting to speak in this debate, a debate we should not be dealing with at the present time, I could not help but listen for a few moments to the severe case of verbal diarrhoea with which the hon. member for Regina-Lake Centre (Mr. Benjamin) appears to have become involved. It would also appear that after you have run a substance through a manure spreader so many times, it does not have that much relevancy.

Mr. Benjamin: Just leave your policy out of it.