

Mr. Robert Muir (Cape Breton-The Sydneys): Mr. Speaker, I do not know why there has been such a change of heart. I thought the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance (Mr. Cullen) gave his consent, as did other members opposite, and suddenly they have changed their minds.

Mr. Cullen: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member says I nodded my head in agreement. I nodded my head because I wanted to hear what the hon. member had to say, not because I wanted to call it six o'clock.

Mr. Muir: Well, Mr. Speaker, I have such great respect for the parliamentary secretary that I will not say that he is completely wrong. Let me say he is just playing around with the truth, because the delightful lady member in front of him suggested it and he agreed. In any event, let us go ahead.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): There should be a point of order there. She is not a delightful lady; she is an hon. member!

Mrs. Campagnolo: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker, I want to put on the record that I am not a delightful lady; I am a member of the House of Commons.

Mr. Muir: I thought she was not only delightful but beautiful. In any event, if she resents that, I apologize. If I may continue without all these interruptions I should like to say a few words regarding this iniquitous measure now before the House, on behalf of the coal miners in my area, the steelworkers, the widows, the senior citizens, the unemployed, the fishermen, businessmen, railway workers, stevedores and all the others who are going to be hit, and hit badly. This is an unfortunate decision on the part of the minister, and I sometimes wonder whether it is his decision.

In any event, before I deal with that I should like to refer to some comments made by the hon. member for Nickel Belt (Mr. Rodriguez). I am sorry he is not here, because when I made an interjection he responded to it and I said I would tell him in a few minutes. In any event, may I say that when the New Democratic Party members wrap themselves in the robes of sanctity and purity and try to make the point that they are the only people in this country who worry about the poor, the workers, the orphans, the widows, the unemployed and the oppressed, what a hypocritical, holier than thou attitude this is! I did not know that all the Liberals, Conservatives, Social Crediters and the independent member for Moncton (Mr. Jones) were all great millionaires and capitalists. This has been indicated by a number of members of the NDP. It must be difficult to be afflicted with tunnel vision to the extent that you can see only one group as the people who worry in the country.

● (1750)

An hon. Member: Haven't you got a speech?

Mr. Muir: Yes, indeed I have a speech and I will refer to the minister's comments and his resolutions, but I should like to reply to the hon. member for Nickel Belt. He talks about the Liberals and the Conservatives. As much as I

Excise Tax Act

hate to admit it, there has been good legislation brought in by Liberal governments in this country—

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Muir: —occasionally.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Muir: There has been good legislation brought in by Conservative governments in this country.

An hon. Member: Even more occasionally.

Mr. Muir: However, my friend the hon. member for Nickel Belt can see nothing but socialism and thinks that no one else is able to represent the people of Canada. This can be done only by those who look to the socialist party. I should like him to know that I was involved in organizing unions, being on strike and out on the picket line, before he even knew what a union was. I started working in a coal mine before I was 15 years of age. We organized the workers and made the unions what they are today—of which the hon. member boasts, incidentally. Thousands of my friends are union members today and many of them still work in the coal mines. A vast majority of my association members are members of unions. I know who the workers are, as well as the hon. member.

The hon. member made reference to the hon. member for Grenville-Carleton (Mr. Baker). Is that hon. member a millionaire? Did he ever work for a living? What does this word "worker" mean? If you are an automobile salesman, do you work all day? If you do not get your hands dirty, are you a worker? What is a worker? A person who works in an office all day is often more tired than a man who has been shovelling coal. I went through one mine explosion and survived, after a couple of weeks in hospital. I was caught in a rock fall and had my spine cracked in a number of places, but I survived after a couple of years in hospital. My point is that it is not just those holier than thou people who can represent the people of Canada and speak out on behalf of the workers.

This proposal that an additional ten cents per gallon of gasoline should be shouldered by the working men and women of this nation—and I mean all the people who work, including those in the banks, for the government, steelworkers and others—is not one I can support and I will not support it. This budget proposal signals the diminishing influence of the Minister of Finance (Mr. Turner) within the Trudeau administration. I suggest this is his final budget and he will not be around to present another one.

I would have to conclude, when comparing this budget proposal and the total budget with other budgets, that this monstrosity was the work of a cabinet committee rather than the work of the minister. It would appear that a cabinet committee married the minister to his abortive attempt to tackle the double problems of inflation and unemployment. However, the marriage lasted only until the end of the presentation of the budget, for when the minister's colleagues realized the extent of the disaster they had created, they quickly divorced themselves from its contents and are now quick to tell us, both inside and