

Excise Tax Act

There was the extension of the sales tax on candy, soft drinks and even pet food, which went into effect in 1985, for an annual cost of \$400 million. There was the extension of sales tax on snack foods, coming into effect in 1987, for a further annual cost of \$60 million. There is the increase in air transport tax, coming into effect in 1987, for an annual cost of \$45 million.

There is the proposed 10 per cent tax on all long distance calls and business telephones, and the increase in cable television tax, coming into effect in 1988, for a further annual cost of \$945 million. There is the proposed increase in sales tax on paint, wallpaper and toys, coming into effect in 1988, for an annual cost of \$370 million.

I have added this up quickly, and it means that the Conservative Government has imposed an additional tax burden of some \$6.65 billion in the few short years since it came into office.

Furthermore, we are talking about an annual increase. This burden goes on and on, on the shoulders of the hard-pressed Canadian taxpayer, especially the lower income taxpayer who bears the heaviest burden of sales and excise taxes.

These are unfair, regressive taxes that do not hurt the wealthy friends of the Conservative Party but particularly hurt middle and lower income Canadians.

These increases are only part of the additional burden placed on ordinary Canadians by this heartless Conservative Government. There are also increases in personal income taxes which have added hundreds of dollars and more to the annual tax burden of middle and lower income Canadians.

Later today the Minister of Finance (Mr. Wilson) will give a statement indicating the Government's final answer to what it laughingly calls tax reform. In that regard, we will find that any reductions that the Government will promise will do nothing more than give back some of the hundreds of millions of dollars improperly taken out of the pockets of middle and lower income Canadians since it came into office. It will not be giving back all of what it has taken. It will not even restore Canadians to where they were in 1984.

While I certainly support the extension of the rebate for farmers, fishermen and the other groups which I have mentioned, we must put on the record what is really happening here. It is not just an extension of the rebate, it is also another hidden tax grab, added to the tax grab of billions of dollars imposed on middle and lower income Canadians in the short years since the Tory Government came into office. I want to put this on the record so that Canadians will very much remember what the Tory Government has done to their pocketbooks when they come to vote. I am sure it will not be long before they have the opportunity to vote and I am sure they will turn out of office the heartless Conservative Government.

Mr. Stan J. Hovdebo (Prince Albert): Mr. Speaker, it is always somewhat dangerous to accept a Bill for passage through all stages without seeing the text of the Bill. This is a Bill where there is that danger.

• (1610)

Bill C-101 does two things. It extends the rebate to people who are primary producers across the country from December 31, 1987 for the next two years. It also increases the tax on fuel by one cent per litre on February 19, 1987. In fact, we have been paying that for some time. It is something to consider that without too much trouble we can collect from the people of the country without passing a Bill in Parliament, but we cannot pay out to the people of the country without passing a Bill. Therefore, at the eleventh hour, we are asked to pass a Bill, which it is necessary to pass, because without it the primary producers who purchase fuel after January 1, 1988 would not be able to get part of the rebate for which they are being considered. Consequently, it is a little dangerous to tell the Government that we will pass something, because what we get in the end is not necessarily what we are told we will get.

Since February 19, 1987 all people across the country have been paying an extra cent per litre on fuel. That is authorized or ratified by this particular Bill. Since that is already in place, it behooves us to pass this Bill, rather than to stop it from going through quickly. But I do point out the danger of accepting a Bill without having the text in its entirety.

In the presentation made yesterday by the Prime Minister (Mr. Mulroney) and the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Wise) before the Agricultural Outlook Conference, we were told that this rebate would be 9 cents per litre for gasoline, and 7.5 cents per litre for diesel fuel. This is a welcome amount, particularly for the farmers and, I am sure, for the hunters, the loggers, the trappers, and the fishermen.

It is interesting to note that this is part of an agricultural package which is a little confusing. The \$1.1 billion going into the special grains payments and deficiency payments is recognized and appreciated. It is also recognized that in a couple of areas the Government did bite the bullet and pay back, or at least cut off the responsibility for the Western Grain Stabilization fund. That was \$750 million that it would eventually find itself picking up, and it may as well be done now.

The other points were spread over two or three years, and consequently had to be divided by two or three. The net result is a rather confusing suggestion that the farmers were getting a lot more in this package than they will get in the next fiscal year. If you read the headlines, Mr. Speaker, you will see how confusing it was. No two reporters picked out the same things. Consequently there is a variety of reports on what was actually proposed yesterday by the Prime Minister and the Minister of Agriculture for farmers.

I appreciate the fact that it is worthwhile to pass quickly a Bill which allows for the increase of taxes and the ability for