

Excise Tax Act

is an important question, because a party should follow the same line in government as in the opposition. That is the reason why Canadians sometimes—

[English]

—are very cynical of politicians in this country.

[Translation]

Mr. Lanthier: Mr. Speaker, I should like first of all to remind the Hon. Member that I have never sat in the opposition. In addition to that, it is understood that we are not allowed to discuss a particular section of the bill. We must deal with the whole bill which contains adjustments one way or the other. Obviously, I am not in a position now to deal with a particular issue or increase without referring to the bill as a whole or going over the very clear explanations which the Minister of State (Finance) (Mrs. McDougall) gave the House this morning. That is the approach. If you want to consider the bill as a whole, I feel that the speech was perfectly clear in this respect, but again I repeat the first part of my statement. We were not in the opposition. People should stop stirring up the past and start looking to the future. This climate of confidence which we are trying to create will be based on the future, because the recent performance of the past government having been so dismal, I do not think it could be used as a basis for anything.

● (1500)

So let us build upon a foundation we already have. I think this bill will indeed go a long way towards providing a kind of continuity in this government. Let us use that foundation to build our future.

Last month's economic statements were our foundation, our starting point. I might say in passing that I have no idea what happened in the Opposition because I was not here. As to the election promises, they should be considered as a whole, not singly one after another. I still have vivid memories of the election campaign, and the reason for that is that, even though I was not in the Opposition, I did take an active part in the campaign. Mr. Speaker, I have to say that throughout the election campaign the Prime Minister always made it a point not to refer to a particular aspect without talking about policy as a whole. In my opinion, it is quite unfair to single out one specific detail without referring to the whole picture so ably presented this morning.

Mr. Nystrom: Mr. Speaker, I know that the Hon. Member was not in the Opposition, but he does belong to the government team and that government made an election promise. I have one specific question to ask: Is the Hon. Member now prepared to throw that promise on the scrap heap? Is he for or against? Is he for or against the provision of the bill to raise the sales tax by 1 per cent? Is he now prepared to throw that election promise on the scrap heap? Yes or no?

Mr. Lanthier: Mr. Speaker, I thought I said clearly and calmly that promises have to be taken as a whole, not piecemeal. That was done. There is absolutely no question of renegeing on any election promise through this bill.

[English]

Mr. Baker: Mr. Speaker, I just wanted to make a brief comment on the hon. gentleman's speech. He made repeated references to the Minister of State for Finance (Mrs. McDougall). I also want to congratulate the Minister for her speech, not for the same reason given by the hon. gentleman, but for conveniently overlooking the obvious when the Government says it will give 20 cents a gallon to primary producers because of financial problems facing primary producers. On the one hand, it gives 20 cents, and on the other hand, it increases oil and gas to world prices. It gives 20 cents while it increases sales tax on certain commodities.

On the one hand, it gives 20 cents to the fishermen, while on the other hand, it tells the fishermen they may have to pay for their weather forecasts. It gives that 20 cents while telling the fishermen they will have to pay to tie up their boats. It gives this rebate while telling the fishermen that the Government will do away with their insurance scheme so that they will have to pay hundreds of dollars more per year to insure their boats.

The other note that I made was that the Minister referred to 20 cents a gallon on the sales tax rebate and the excise tax rebate. She and the Government conveniently overlooked in all of their statements the fact that the excise tax rebate was always there. It was brought in by a Liberal Government in 1975. Taxpayers simply made their claim and kept their receipts at home. There was not a word of distinction made by the Minister of State for Finance nor was there anything in the documents emanating from the Department of National Revenue about conveniently overlooking a matter of fact concerning that excise tax rebate.

[Translation]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Charest): If there are no further questions or comments, we will proceed with debate. The Hon. Member for . . . Did the Hon. Parliamentary Secretary intend to answer?

Mr. Lanthier: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Charest): The Hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance (Mr. Lanthier).

Mr. Lanthier: This has been quite a charge against the spirit of this legislation. When it so happens that at one point we do something and at another point we do something else, that in one instance we do something and in the other instance we do something else, well, this is exactly what we intend to cure with this legislation. The goal is to have the place back in order. There is no question and we never made any secret of that, of simply lightening the burden with that Bill. The purpose is to make a redistribution, and listen! We also have to