

Excise Tax Act

Member for York East (Mr. Redway)—Law Reform—Imposition of prison sentences; the Hon. Member for Ottawa-Vanier (Mr. Gauthier)—Public Service (a) Request that documents signed with unions be tabled. (b) Pensions; the Hon. Member for Broadview-Greenwood (Ms. McDonald) (a) Social Security Coalition of women for family allowances—Government position. (b) Election debate.

We will now proceed with the debate. The Hon. Member for Quebec East (Mr. Tremblay).

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*Translation*]

EXCISE TAX ACT AND RELATED ACTS

MEASURE TO AMEND

The House resumed consideration of the motion of Mrs. McDougall that Bill C-80, an Act to amend the Excise Tax Act and the Excise Act and to amend other Acts in consequence thereof, be read the second time and referred to a legislative committee.

Mr. Marcel R. Tremblay (Quebec East): Before beginning my remarks, Mr. Speaker, I would like to make a brief comment. You know how fast the situation can change here in Ottawa, and we have to revise our priorities on a regular basis. I want to commend our staff for the outstanding work they do to enable us to deliver the goods when we need them. I express my sincere appreciation to our legislative and secretarial staff for their unrelenting support and assistance.

As you may recall, Mr. Speaker, Hon. Members were eager to comment on the Budget presented by the Minister of Finance (Mr. Wilson) last May 23. I am just as pleased and honoured to take the floor today to speak to the Bill to amend the Excise Tax Act and the Excise Act. If I remember correctly, the Bill was given first reading on October 18.

As I said in a speech I delivered in this House nearly five months ago this day, the Wilson Budget is fair and equitable, realistic and productive. Mr. Speaker, I am glad to see that you remember what I said five months ago.

While Members of the Opposition do their utmost to claim that the measures are too harsh, they pretend to be tax experts and economists to say how surprised they were that the Budget was not even more drastic. The Canadian people also support the steps taken by this Government to reduce the deficit. Last September 4, they told us loudly and unanimously: Get rid of those leaders who behave like all-powerful deities and take pleasure in spending as if there were no tomorrow. I would almost dare say they were showing their irresponsibility to the people who had put their faith in them for so long.

Last May 23, Mr. Speaker, all Canadians were expecting to hear at long last the voice of reason tell them to tighten their

belts in a spirit of fairness and justice for all since no group would be favoured in relation to any other. The Government even backed down in full knowledge of the facts when senior citizens protested about the deindexing of old age security pensions.

We listen to the population when it calls for our help. We do not let the public agonize under a mountain of tax inequities.

The Budget of May 23 announced three major objectives which I will not comment today. I shall simply say that the first two already seem nearer as action has been taken to promote private enterprise and improve the management of public finances.

Mr. Speaker, how can we slow and eventually stop the increase of our national debt, which has now reached \$200 billion? How can we correct a situation where, in the last three years, our national debt has increased by 75 per cent while our economic growth was only 25 per cent? As one of my colleagues just pointed out, the previous Government literally left us in the red, Mr. Speaker.

Massive borrowings were needed to make ends meet. The Canadian public is well aware that one third of each dollar goes to pay the interests incurred while, ten years ago, servicing the debt represented only one eighth of each dollar. Mr. Speaker, the situation faced by our Government was an aberration.

It had to try to find additional funds to prevent our country from sinking in a slump which was paralyzing all our population and even the Government itself.

Our Government got to work and decided, not to take very rigorous action to control our increasing yearly deficit, but rather to take a more cautious, a more conservative approach. We have chosen an approach which can solve, or at least reduce our debt problem given time. This is why public revenues and expenditures had to be rationalized.

Mr. Speaker, I shall now deal more directly with Bill C-80, which is especially concerned with the obtention of public revenues. I cannot overemphasize the fact that three quarters of the initiatives taken by our Government to this date to control the deficit aim at reducing expenditures rather than at increasing public revenues. This increase in the revenue produced by consumer taxes is only one more step which will guarantee to the Canadian people that our Government is keeping its promises and proving one more time that it is worthy of their confidence as concerns its management of the Canadian economy.

Our initiatives have already begun to show results. As my colleague for Nepean-Carleton (Mr. Tupper) mentioned earlier, the creation of at least 300,000 jobs has considerably reduced the unemployment rate. Inflation is going down and these tendencies should continue for a while.