

Taxation Reform

into consideration the problem facing these people and rectify the situation in which they have found themselves for many years.

Another point that should be made is that many people are allowed exemptions on away-from-home expenses. I should like to receive an assurance from the minister that the \$150 maximum will be considered distinct from exemptions for away-from-home expenses. It was my understanding that this was so, but I should like the assurance to appear in *Hansard* that this is the intention of the government. The most important thing to recognize is that we are all very concerned about the needs of people who are on fixed incomes and low pensions. We should make sure they are given the \$4,000 basic exemption.

There are too many cases of people in our society who make contributions to various political groups for which allowance is made when they come to pay their taxes. A good example of this occurred yesterday when a question was put to one of the witnesses from Montreal who appeared before us. He was asked whether he had in fact made any contributions to a political fund. Unfortunately, the witness was not allowed to answer the question because the chairman of the committee did not consider the question came within our terms of reference, even though the gentleman concerned was willing to answer it. The same thing applied then. Too many political donations are being made and considered as tax deductible. If we do not want people to look upon each other with suspicion, we must have tax reform which will bring about the necessary changes and which will benefit all those in our society who need help. Taxation should not be applied in such a way that it benefits some and not others.

I urge that the government give serious consideration to a general deduction for employment expenses, and to an increase in basic exemption so that the people in our society who are not able to live in dignity will be able to stand up, look at their neighbours and say "I am proud to be a Canadian and to participate in our Canadian society".

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Béchard): Is the House ready for the question?

Mr. G. W. Baldwin (Peace River): Mr. Speaker, I am glad to participate in this debate for a variety of reasons. I note the unusually large number of government members who in a spirit of devotion have come here, I hope to hear me speak. I was delighted

to hear the speeches of my friends to my left. I find they have come back to the pure gold of their party philosophy. After listening and seeing what took place in Winnipeg, I wondered for a while. The tremendous speech of the hon. member for York South (Mr. Lewis) when he defeated the waffling Watkinites and so stoutly defended the status quo gave me some foresight into a situation which might occur if, God forbid, some day my friends to my left were to hold the reins of government. I could picture the hon. member for York South as minister of finance, defending an austerity program.

● (3:30 p.m.)

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Baldwin: First, Mr. Speaker, I want to discuss some of the procedures which might well be followed when—I hope it will be shortly this afternoon—having given this matter cursory examination the House sees fit to send the white paper to committee. Let me make it quite plain that I think we should examine very closely some of the procedures which have been followed in the past with regard to a committee engaging the staff which it requires to facilitate the thorough and careful examination of issues.

I think it is fallacious nonsense to suggest that in all cases, or even in most cases, experts and staff hired by a committee function for the benefit of the committee and all the committee members. This is just not the case. I am not faulting anyone, but these are the facts of life. What happens in most cases is that the experts become an extension of the chairman and his supporting government members on the committee. I do not believe that should be the case. We are operating under an adversary system. I do not say that in an unkind way; that is the way it should be in order to have the most thorough and careful examination of any problem. That is what Parliament is for. When matters are sent to a committee, where by reason of the physical establishment of the committee it is possible to develop a line of cross-examination, to call witnesses and examine and cross-examine them, I think we should bear in mind that the adversary system still prevails, although not in as partisan a way as it does in the House of Commons. I think committees can be mellow in that regard.

I suggest that in a matter obviously as complex and as difficult as this, one which has been regarded all through the country with a