

Mr. Stevens: How does the minister know they were satisfied? Did people write back saying "Your tax is quite satisfactory, go ahead and impose it?"

● (1610)

Mr. Turner (Ottawa-Carleton): Mr. Chairman, I can state to the hon. member that to anyone who holds this portfolio, no correspondence or no news is good news.

Mr. Stevens: Mr. Chairman, I wish to direct one final question to the minister dealing with the Turner ten cent tax. In view of the fact the \$1.50 increase per barrel of oil will be effective as far as the retail price is concerned on August 15, has any consideration been given to cutting back the ten cent tax effective that date in order to ensure there will be no further price increase at the retail level on August 15?

Mr. Turner (Ottawa-Carleton): No, sir.

Mr. Symes: Mr. Chairman, one of the points the opposition has been making in debate on this ten cent a gallon tax is that, people who have no other option will still have to drive their cars to work and hence they will be hit by this discriminatory tax, so the consumption of gasoline will not go down. In the last election campaign, the Liberal party made some rather grandiose promises to the people of Canada about improving public transit. They said they would forge ahead with improving municipal bus lines and an urban train system from the suburbs to the centres of the cities, as well as subways. I would like to know what has happened to those great promises.

I always assumed that Liberals were men and women of their word; once they said something they would live up to it. Judging by the results of July 8, many Canadians thought they were honest people who would live up to their promises. I would like the Minister of Finance to tell us what happened to those promises. On June 17, 1974 in Toronto, the Prime Minister announced a \$270 million program to aid public transit. He said a Liberal government would pay 100 per cent of the cost of Canadian-made commuter vehicles and 50 per cent of the cost of platforms and stations. The government would also pay 25 per cent of the cost of Canadian manufactured vehicles for public transit within cities.

[Translation]

Mr. Fox: On a point of order, Mr. Chairman, the hon. member is not at all dealing with the matter under consideration by the House. I am prepared to hear and consider the points of view he is raising, but for the well-being of the House, I think he should limit his remarks to the matter now under consideration by the House.

[English]

Mr. Symes: I know Liberals do not like to hear old promises exposed or brought up again. My point is that the Minister of Finance is saying this tax will encourage Canadians to use alternate means of transport. I ask the minister, where are they? We know that public transit is the only logical alternative to driving a car. I am asking the minister to explain what has happened to those promises to improve public transit. That is entirely relevant.

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As I was saying, the Prime Minister in that election campaign said that encouragement and assistance would be given to smaller municipalities for the creation of new transit systems, Canadian industry would be encouraged to develop passenger vehicles, and experimentation with new transit systems would be assisted by federal financing of demonstration projects.

The following day, June 18, 1974, the Prime Minister announced in Cornwall, Ontario, that a Liberal government would take responsibility for rail passenger service out of the hands of Canadian National and Canadian Pacific Railways and entrust the task to a new Crown corporation. The corporation would run high-speed rail services in heavily populated areas such as the Windsor-Quebec City corridor, introduce luxurious transcontinental excursion trains and establish a "super-bus" service between medium sized cities.

The Liberals also promised to set up a national urban transportation development corporation to promote improvements and develop policy on urban transportation. The corporation is mentioned in the 1973-74 annual report of the Ministry of State for Urban Affairs, but as the minister was forced to admit in committee on May 1, 1975, the corporation has not even been set up as yet. There were three major promises in the last election to promote public transit, providing an alternative for people instead of using their automobiles. I ask the Minister of Finance, who I believe is an honourable man who lives up to promises, when can we expect to see these three major promises, made by the Prime Minister in the last election campaign, come into effect and provide automobile drivers with a logical alternative?

Mr. Turner (Ottawa-Carleton): Mr. Chairman, only the Prime Minister is entitled to respond to that type of question on behalf of the government.

Mr. Symes: Mr. Chairman, the minister knows full well that it is a cabinet decision. The decision is based on what the Minister of Finance sees as budget priorities. All we can conclude is that the minister does not see any need to uphold election promises. He does not see any need—

The Chairman: Order, please. I believe the Chair has been most lenient with the hon. member. At some points, there has been a connection with the clause under debate. The hon. member is aware of Standing Order 55(2) which instructs members to direct their remarks to the relevant clauses before the committee.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Benjamin: Mr. Chairman, I have a few more questions to ask the minister. To begin with, I find it very strange that in answering my colleague, the hon. member for Sault Ste. Marie, he would disavow promises made by the Prime Minister by saying that only he can answer them. I thought that any member of the Liberal party could do that.

I would like to ask the minister whether he, his colleagues or his officials, would give some rough or ballpark figures, if not exact ones, on the situation east of the Ottawa river. I take it that most of the expenditures out of the consumption fund will be to subsidize the export price