

*Excise Tax Act Amendment*

Mr. ABBOTT: This has nothing to do with the constitution. His statement was not a public statement; mine was. There are a few points of difference. Mine was a public statement to the people of Canada; his was a statement to a newspaperman.

Mr. MERRITT: It gets weaker and weaker.

Mr. ABBOTT: What is known as a leak.

Mr. MERRITT: It gets weaker and weaker.

Mr. ABBOTT: I am only answering my hon. friend's analogy. There is no analogy at all.

Mr. SKEY: You just said you were going to tell the press the next time.

Mr. ABBOTT: It would be a statement to all the press and not to one newspaper reporter. It would be again a public statement.

Mr. MERRITT: The minister said he would do it by a press release the next time.

Mr. ABBOTT: I jokingly said I might issue a press statement the next time.

Mr. MERRITT: I know, but the minister is joking too much, and I hope we shall impress upon him that this is a matter over which he cannot joke.

Mr. ABBOTT: My only reason for interrupting was to point out that the hon. member was trying to draw an analogy which does not exist.

Mr. MERRITT: I will agree with the minister that there is one great difference between the two situations.

Mr. ABBOTT: My statement was made so that everyone in Canada would know what was intended.

Mr. MERRITT: As an hon. member has just said, so was Gottwald's statement made so that everyone in Czechoslovakia would know what was intended.

Mr. ABBOTT: Cheap stuff, very cheap stuff, if I may say so.

Mr. MERRITT: The minister says, "Cheap stuff".

Some hon. MEMBERS: Yes.

Some hon. MEMBERS: Hear, hear.

An hon. MEMBER: Expensive stuff.

Mr. MERRITT: I stand here and say that I am not making my remarks lightly. I do not hold the constitution cheap.

Mr. ABBOTT: Neither does the minister.

[Mr. Merritt.]

Mr. MERRITT: I am not going to be satisfied to see this passed off, and I warn the minister of that.

Mr. ABBOTT: You have your vote the same as anyone else in the house.

Mr. MERRITT: The minister says that there is no analogy between the Dalton case and his own case.

Mr. ABBOTT: I find it hard to see any. There may be some but I cannot see it.

Mr. MERRITT: The difference is, of course, that in the Dalton case the offence was less heinous. In the Dalton case the house was in session. The minister acted by inadvertence; no harm was done; no tax was collected; no speculation took place. But the minister never gave it a second thought. He knew he had done wrong and he resigned. He will probably be reinstated. My hon. friend's career would not be long interrupted if he respected the constitution. In that case what happened was known as a budget leak, and the only difference I can see between that act of momentary carelessness and the minister's studied disregard for parliament is that one is called a budget leak and the other might be termed a budget deluge. That may be the distinction to which the minister is referring. I will say no more in that regard at the present time. I am sorry that the minister does not seem to realize that his act is a very dangerous one for the stability of our constitution. I am sorry, too, that I have had to raise the matter in the way I have done. But I feel it my duty to raise this issue in its most blunt form, because in my opinion no more serious or more important issue has faced the house since I have sat here as a member.

Mr. ABBOTT: That is not very long.

Mr. KNOWLES: Mr. Chairman, there is a good deal of laughter and derision coming from the other side of the house tonight, but I should like to ask the Liberals for just a moment to consider what the situation would be if the tables were turned.

Mr. MARTIN: No chance of that happening.

Mr. KNOWLES: Just suppose, to stick to a hypothesis, that the Tories had been in power—

Mr. MARTIN: That is impossible.

Mr. KNOWLES: —and that a Tory minister of finance had done what the Liberal Minister of Finance has done. Suppose hon. members