

cally unfair because it provides rebates for those most able to pay the tax, but none for those least able to pay.

The minister wants to induce people not to use the car, and to use other modes of transportation. Our society is wedded to the automobile as its primary mode of transportation. Other countries which tried to discourage automobile travel with high gasoline prices did not succeed. Such policies are not effective. True, there may be a modest diversion away from the automobile in favour of the bus or train. But our intercity and urban transit systems are totally inadequate. To compound the felony, although the minister says he wants more people to use other modes of transportation, and thereby tries to justify this excise tax, the budget cut the funds available to the Minister of Transport (Mr. Marchand). That shows how absurd the budget is and how absurd this bill is.

If the minister really wants people to use modes of transportation other than the car, and really wants us to conserve energy, he should bring in a budget which provides for massive funding, through the Department of Transport, of intercity and urban transport facilities. There should be massive funding in the next five years, involving the Ministry of Transport and aid to provinces, cities and municipalities. But the budget did no such thing.

The Minister of Transport's policy proposal announcement referred specifically, I think, to the Windsor-Quebec City corridor. If the Minister of Transport and the Minister of Finance were serious, they would introduce a budget and subsequent legislation providing for hundreds of millions of dollars to be spent on light, rapid and comfortable—LRC—rail service linking the Detroit River, Quebec City and other heavily populated areas of the country. But the budget does not provide for this. How can the minister expect the people to respond voluntarily, or feel it is worth while using other modes of transportation, when those other modes charge fares which in most cases are unreasonably high?

Really, what has the minister done to persuade people not to use their automobiles, or to get rid of their second or third car and not use a car for so many pleasure trips or so many trips downtown? I thought there would have been proposals in the budget or in subsequent statements or legislation for not only massive aid for urban or interurban transportation, but a system of fares and rates as well as the integration of various modes of transportation, such as rail, subway and bus. I thought there would be a fare structure that would encourage people to use other modes of transportation.

● (1630)

In last year's election campaign and in statements prior to that, Liberal Party spokesmen pledged that if re-elected they would establish a passenger corporation. That has been quietly shelved and forgotten since July 8, 1974. There was nothing in the budget and we have not heard anything from the Minister of Transport about a national passenger corporation. During the election campaign, the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau), the Minister of Transport and others said they would either take over or require Canadian National, Canadian Pacific and other passenger

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carrying operations to provide much better passenger service to the public of this country. That has been forgotten.

There was a pledge for massive aid for intercity and urban transit. We have not seen a nickel. The Minister of Finance says that if we increase the price of gasoline by another 20 cents a gallon, the Canadian people will be encouraged to use other modes of transportation. However, those other modes are not there in sufficient quantity or quality. I do not think this parliament should stand for the kinds of anomalies and absurdities arising out of the budget.

Speakers on both sides have pointed out how the Minister of Finance can raise the required revenue in a much fairer manner that would not hurt those who can least afford it. Surely that is an objective of members of all parties. It would not be the first time in the history of this or other parliaments that a minister of finance has accepted the views of members of all parties and has either changed or substituted legislation. We had an example of this today. Although it was a matter of privilege, as a result of the representations of members on both sides of this House last winter, the minister made a significant change in his tax proposals.

It would be no disgrace to the minister, his advisers or the government if they accepted the views expressed not only by members of parliament, but by the public at large. In fact, it would be to their credit; it would show they are big enough to change their minds and bring in a measure to raise the required money in a manner different from that proposed in Bill C-66.

The Canadian Automobile Association recognizes the need for energy conservation. It recognizes that more will have to be done about the quality and quantity of other modes of transportation. This should be readily accessible, with reasonable fares, for a much larger number of people in this country. In fact, this was pointed out in a submission which was mailed to all members. Coming from a source like that, it should be sufficient to convince the Minister of Finance and the government that the method proposed in Bill C-66 is not the one to follow to raise the revenue required for the oil compensation fund. I have been very saddened since yesterday to note that friends to my right have caved in again.

Mr. Baldwin: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. That statement is entirely incorrect. This party put up some 30 speakers who in short, sharp, concise speeches challenged the right of the government in connection with this tax, while the NDP was sitting on its collective seat. We are now waiting for committee of the whole stage where we can challenge individual clauses, as is our parliamentary right.

Mr. Benjamin: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member for Peace River (Mr. Baldwin) was good enough to help me use up some more time. I will consider that as another contribution to try to persuade the government not to proceed with this legislation. He told us that some 30 Conservative members participated. What happened to the other 67? Why have there not been 97 speeches from the official opposition on this bill? Where are the others? Are they more interested in fishing trips and laying around the backyard than in the public of this country? We have