

*Income Tax Act*

crippling the economy, interest rates which simply cannot be continued at their present level. It pinpoints as well the violent changes in government policy. This article, which as I say is as penetrating and perceptive today as it was in September, concludes with this comment:

What Canada needs is not a change in the country's longer term objective of well-based prosperity, but the simple recognition that the pace of spending has been running ahead of real output.

• (4:50 p.m.)

Well, sir, the government's recognition of this fact has been to increase this year's main estimates as contrasted with last year's main estimates by almost 8 per cent. I am going to deal with the Prime Minister's figures in this respect. Restraint is what the government preaches, but extravagance and wastefulness are what it practices. In his statement this afternoon the Prime Minister said that the increase in the estimates this year was 4.1 per cent over last year. I suggest that this figure is simply a delusion. It compares apples with oranges. It compares next year's main estimates with the total of all of this year's estimates. It is a phony technique of argument.

This comparison gives no consideration whatever to the supplementary estimates, no consideration to the expenditures that will be required for medicare. I say to you that the only realistic figure to put forward in any comparison of the main estimates for next year would be an increase of almost 8 per cent over last year's main estimates. There is the Expo deficit and a variety of other things to consider. Before we are finished the increase will be considerably more. I did not think it was sporting of the Prime Minister this afternoon to attempt to unload so much of the blame on the provinces and municipalities. What he did not say was that many of the provincial and municipal costs result from the fact that this government forced their hands in cost-sharing programs, and the proposal for July 1 next is forcing their hands even more.

I want to come back to the fact that this bill, as the main part of this fourth budget, came about by the most extraordinary procedure in budget history. Its second birth, resulting from Your Honour's ruling, deserves the attention of Shakespeare. The only way to describe it is, "a comedy of errors". Twenty years ago the then minister of finance, Mr. Abbott, brought about budget by radio, then a unique process of bypassing parliament and violating all constitutional precepts. The

[Mr. Bell (Carleton).]

uproar which resulted from that technique ought to have laid these odd procedures to final rest. But oh, no, what Mr. Abbott could do the present minister could do better. Last Wednesday afternoon he condescended to tell the house that he intended to propose tax measures. Did he disclose to the house what they were? Not at all. He decided to upstage Mr. Abbott by holding, within an hour of the adjournment of this house, a press conference to tell what he declined to disclose to the people's representatives. Budget by press conference is the new technique for ministers who are "with it". By coincidence, there was a popular television program later that evening and naturally the star of the show was the minister.

Budget by press conference lasted only an hour and a half as the accepted new technique and was replaced by budget by television. So Mr. Abbott, with his old fashioned budget by radio, was passé. The new technique of defiance of parliament, the new way of expressing "parliament be damned" is budget by press conference and budget by television. Finally, this afternoon we have had budget by instalments.

Again, it was the Minister of National Revenue who let the cat out of the bag completely. During the same television interview to which I referred earlier this question was put to the Minister of National Revenue by Mr. Martin:

This week there were announced new fiscal measures after the defeat in the commons of the temporary surtax of 5 per cent. These were announced by means of a press conference; it is rather unusual, let us say, in the traditions and usages of parliament.

The Minister of National Revenue replied:

Yes, it is unusual. It is the first time for a tax to be announced by way of a press conference. But it was as the result of the circumstances which prevailed last week. We were negotiating with several countries and with the United States in particular to stabilize the dollar—

Apparently the minister knew about the negotiations that were going on, although he did not really know the dollar was in difficulty. The Minister of Finance did not disclose the figures to his colleague, apparently.

—and it was absolutely necessary to disclose the new tax to the House of Commons. Since it was a Wednesday, the minister made his presentation in the afternoon without saying precisely what were the nature of the taxes he would levy and he tabled at six o'clock in the House of Commons the budgetary resolutions and he thought that these could lie—