

*Income Tax*

I do not see very much in the way of real relief for the poor and the working poor in this bill. I commend my colleague, the hon. member for Fraser Valley East (Mr. Patterson), for pointing out to the socialists to my left that we in the Conservative Party have not called for any cuts in government expenditures that would work additional hardship on the people of our country. Of course, one does not hear their ranting any more since the voters cut them down to size at the last election. We used to hear a bit of shouting now and again, but now it is only a murmur. What we have called for and will continue to press for is a drastic reduction in government waste and a reduction in reckless spending on non-essential government programs.

**Mr. Benjamin:** Name some.

**Mr. Darling:** If we cut out at least some of the appalling waste in government spending we would have more money to spend on essential programs for the working people in this country.

**Mr. Benjamin:** Name some.

**Mr. Darling:** I will let you do that. Millions of people in Canada today are working full time but still cannot avail themselves of decent housing or an adequate diet. Those people are contributing to our economic system and are in fact the backbone of the system, but for tens of thousands of them all they are getting out of the system is a bare existence.

This government has a hang-up on bilingualism. I certainly cannot be accused of being anti this particular program. Hundreds of millions of dollars go into this program each year. It is one of the government's biggest expenditures. However, it is not getting the returns that I feel it should. I am one member on this side of the House who takes French lessons every week. I hope to be able to converse in French in 10 or 15 years. I am at least optimistic enough to take the lessons. I say to members opposite that I hope to be in St. Jean for another one-week's immersion course beginning February 18. At least I understand French. In a speech to the faithful in Montreal, the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) stated he would remain in office until this entire country is bilingual. I believe it has been worked out that he will break all records by reaching the age of 200. Whether there is any truth to that, I am not sure.

**Mr. Turner (Ottawa-Carleton):** You have given him a real challenge.

● (1540)

**Mr. Darling:** I would ask the minister to remember that a great many people who live in Parry Sound are by no means rich; a great many people living on low or fixed incomes are finding it increasingly hard to get by. That is why I am here trying to represent their interests.

**Mr. Turner (Ottawa-Carleton):** It is one of the most beautiful constituencies in the country.

**Mr. Darling:** Exactly. Then there is the matter of the oriental potentate, Paul-Gérin Lajoie. Mr. Speaker, that dandy flies around the world with a flock of loyal camp followers, trying to find ways to give away more hundreds

[Mr. Darling.]

of millions of dollars each year. He makes all the decisions as to who is to get these free Canadian millions, yet he refuses to answer even the most basic questions put by members of parliament. I happen to be one of the potentate's bosses, and as long as parliament is the top level of our government I intend to reserve the right to question any and all officials appointed by the government.

It is time we got the full story of just what Paul-Gérin Lajoie is doing with our tax money. Who gave him the sole right to decide who receives gifts of Canadian money? Why is it that he cannot be brought before a parliamentary committee, and why is he entitled to an expense account which allows him to live like an Arab oil sheik? I want to look at the books of the Canadian International Development Agency, and I don't care who accuses me of not being in favour of foreign aid.

Everyone who handles public money in our country is subject to the same laws concerning full disclosure of his official conduct. He or she is subject to scrutiny by the House. Every person entrusted with the disbursement of public funds is subject to periodic questioning. This is what I want, and what I demand, with regard to the Canadian International Development Agency. We have heard enough clear evidence to convince us that a large part of our aid money to the so-called developing nations is being distributed unwisely; and when I say "unwisely" I am being as charitable as I can. There is no reason why we should not get as much mileage from aid dollars as we get from dollars spent on domestic programs.

Further to my remarks about taxation, I suggest that many people, probably tens of thousands, should not be on the tax rolls at all. Why should anyone earning, say, \$8,000 or \$9,000 a year be obliged to pay income tax just as a person earning \$15,000 is required to do? These people already have enough on their backs to cope with; they are finding it hard enough to put food on the table, to send their children to school and to put a few dollars aside for recreation. Loading taxes on these people does not make sense in present circumstances. The Minister of Finance and the government to which he belongs will be spending in excess of \$25 billion this year. That is a lot of money. We realize that a great deal of this expenditure, in fact the great majority of it, is necessary. However, let us hope that some restraint will be exercised with regard to programs which are not absolutely necessary.

Again, if I might make a plea to the Minister of Finance, I would say this: I am quite sure that money will be flowing into the till; that the pockets of government will be bulging at the seams. If any extra money is to be expended, let it be channelled back to the provinces with the proviso that it go directly to the municipalities to help them keep down real estate taxes. A great many people today, though they are not subject to federal taxation are nevertheless obliged to pay municipal taxes if they wish to hold on to their homes. In many cases municipal councils have been obliged to increase their taxes because of the tremendous cost of doing business. I express the hope that the minister, in his wisdom, will see fit to follow up my suggestion by making extra assistance available to the municipalities. Ideally, I would like such assistance to be given directly, but I realize that in the circumstances this is not possible.