

Excise Tax

request. They did not request a reduction in the tax by even one cent. I hope the minister will at least respond to it.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Bussières: Mr. Speaker, with respect to the same point of order, I apologize to the hon. member. I had it in my notes. I wanted to speak of the request for an extension, from 30 to 90 days, of the time granted for payment of the natural gas tax in the case of co-operatives. However, as one can see, in all cases, we have a 30-day period. It could always be argued that an exception could be made in the case of co-operatives. However, should we have an exception? Is it warranted? Or else should the period in all cases be extended from 30 to 90 days? Finally, it should be noted that this extension could appeal to other groups, either individuals or manufacturers, who must comply with the 30-day period.

Hon. Marcel Lambert (Edmonton West): Mr. Speaker, I wonder if the hon. minister takes into account the fact that on the average it takes the post office ten days to deliver bills and even with all the good will it will take another ten days to send the cheque in for payment. Therefore, that only leaves a margin of ten days. Moreover, the co-ops would in fact be able to pay the outstanding tax, within the 30-day period, long before their customers have even received their bills and had the opportunity to pay them. Is the minister aware of that?

● (2020)

Mr. Bussières: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member's questions seem to imply that neither I, as an individual, nor the government are concerned about the needs of the people. The problem is not concern about people's needs but the respective merits of universality versus individual cases. The hon. member is asking about the time lag between sending and receiving a bill. As he is well versed in accounting, he is certainly aware that there exists a billing procedure which eliminates everything, which eliminates—

Mr. Lambert: Even in rural areas?

Mr. Bussières: Surely I know more about rural areas than the hon. member who lives in the city of Edmonton. Bell Canada uses the same billing system whether its customers live in Normandin, Charlesbourg or Edmonton. Equal billing means setting a monthly average with adjustments at the end of the year which permit tax refunds and regular revenues on all sorts of consumer goods, such as fuel oil, gas, telephone or electricity.

[*English*]

Mr. Taylor: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order. It is a pretty poor show when the minister rationalizes a simple request about simply delaying the payment. Because of that the co-ops must go to the banks, borrow money and put more debts on the backs of the producers. Who is this government working for, the banks or the people?

Mr. Evans: I rise on a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, there is a very fundamental point here which hon. members opposite seem to be missing. Let us consider the manufacturers' excise tax which is very similar—

Mr. Wilson: We are talking about natural gas.

Mr. Evans: Let us talk about the principle which underlies this matter. I know the hon. member does not talk about principles very often. Let us use an automobile dealer as an example. He buys cars, and built into the price of those cars is a 9 per cent manufacturers' excise tax. The automobile dealer must go out and borrow the money to carry his inventory. Should we say that it is not necessary for him to go out and borrow the money and therefore we should extend payment on the tax until the dealer sells the car?

What about the gas distributor in Sarnia who must bring in the gas and hold it for six months before it is distributed? It is not distributed but the tax is paid. Should that distributor also have up to six or seven months to pay? Why does the hon. member think that since it happens to be a co-op it should receive special treatment?

Mr. Wilson: That is not the point.

Mr. Evans: The principle is that the tax is paid at the time the product is transferred to the distributor. That is the principle which has been followed in all other cases and there is no reason why it should not be followed in this case.

Mr. Taylor: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With all due respect, the Chair has recognized hon. members on more than one occasion. This is not Committee of the Whole. We are at report stage.

Is the House ready for the question?

Mr. Taylor: I have a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for Bow River on a point of order.

Mr. Taylor: I do not pay income tax until after I make the money. Why—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The hon. member is on a point of argument, not a point of order.

Is the House ready for the question?

Some hon. Members: Question.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The question is on motion No. 36. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the said motion?

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

Some hon. Members: No.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: All those in favour will please say yea.

Some hon. Members: Yea.