

Income Tax

I do not represent very many fatcats. Civil servants are fatcats, but most of them live in Ottawa or Hull. They certainly do not live in Timiskaming. They have not thought of doing anything about the 25 per cent unemployment in my area. The government moved a Liberal from a riding south of mine into the cabinet. The people in his riding do not have the problems of the people in my riding, but they have been stupid enough to vote Liberal for a long time, and they will probably continue to do so. I represent workers, and many of them are disadvantaged because of distance. Every time they go into a restaurant they find fatcats sitting around buying meals for each other. They are fatcats, whether they be civil servants or salesmen from some company.

I once went to an eating place in Ottawa. I saw a man there who was a salesman employed by Simpsons at the time. I knew he was not too well off, because I had had some dealings with him. I did not really think he could afford to eat there. When I saw the menu, I did not think I could either. I thought it was a very expensive place. I told him I thought it was an expensive place for him to be eating at. He pointed out that his supplier was buying. His supplier took all the salesmen in his department to that restaurant. The supplier did not sell to the salesmen. Not one of them was buying a thing from the supplier's company. They were being taken out for good will. I had to pay for my meal. That was why I was asking those questions. Most members of parliament have to buy their own meals, unless they have some outside interest.

An hon. Member: I thought I saw you at the Chateau.

Mr. Peters: The only time I go to the Chateau is when somebody invites me for dinner.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Peters: In most cases I am invited by a manufacturing association, a mining association or any of a number of other agencies. In each case the expense is written off, and I pay part of it. So does the hon. member opposite, and he does not eat the meal. We all pay for that, and we all know that. That is what I am complaining about. If it is good for the fatcats, it is good for everyone.

I remember, 20 years ago, members from rural ridings asking for some relief for workers so that they could pay for lodgings which were necessary if they were to get jobs. I remember hon. members—and I was one of them—fighting for allowances for tools and other benefits for workers. We thought we were lucky when workers did get benefits. The deduction went to \$150. Now, in its generosity, the government is going to make it \$250. Under no circumstances can the parliamentary secretary stand before his peers in this House and say that that is equitable. It is a sop; it has nothing to do with fairness or equality.

We will continue to have this problem under this government. All we are pleading for is equality. If a company says a man has to drive to work or he cannot get a job, then that man should be given a certificate. We do not give certificates to company officials; they are just given charge cards and every-

[Mr. Peters.]

one assumes they are company employees. The manager of a company can give a charge card to his wife and she can take the ladies out to dinner and write off the cost. Many women do that. Perhaps they might invite a gentleman on occasion. Let the company make a declaration that a worker incurs certain expenses in the course of his work. We would certainly support that.

● (1732)

Why does the parliamentary secretary stand up and say it is equitable? It is dishonest, and everyone knows it is not equitable. We are cheating those who work and who cannot write off expenses. If the minister says again that it is equitable, I would like him to tell me how expense accounts in this country are checked. Many abuses in this country which are normal procedure in the business community are just not allowed in the United States. It would not hurt to allow workers in this country to write off the expenses incurred in the course of their employment, any more than it hurts to allow the business community to write off legitimate expenses incurred in the course of business. Of course the business community has abused their exemptions on many occasions, but I do not think we would encounter the same abuse by the workers. This \$250 allowance will be of assistance to the workers, but in no way should we call it equity.

Mr. Lumley: Mr. Chairman, if the hon. member and his colleagues are talking about the elimination of abuses in terms of expenses, we on this side are 100 per cent in agreement. He referred to cases of tax evasion, and I hope he has reported them to the Minister of National Revenue who will take very prompt action to investigate them. Like many members on both sides of this House, I represent the public servants whom the hon. member calls non-workers and claims they do not have the same problems as people in his riding. I can assure you, Mr. Chairman, that a lot of us take exception to that. Public servants have the problems the hon. member alludes to. Because of the decentralization program this government has undertaken, a lot of public servants do not live in strictly urban centres but are scattered from coast to coast.

Mr. Jones: Mr. Chairman, every time the Income Tax Act comes before the House I get so ugly, so temperamental, because I have seen so many people whipped by this act. I really mean "whipped." Reference was made today to municipal officials. Certainly they get one-third, but there is nothing in this legislation to say they are entitled to it. I say it should be contained in the legislation and not authorized by a letter from the Minister of National Revenue or from a district taxation office. That exemption should be included in the bill.

I do not know how many members are lawyers, accountants or businessmen, but I know that very few can interpret this bill. It is beyond interpretation, Mr. Chairman. It is the craziest, most stupid, ridiculous piece of ambiguity and verbosity to appear in the Statutes of Canada.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!