

Income Tax Act

support the reasoning that I want to make regarding clauses 109 and 110, I must find some argument. This is what the Minister of Finance (Mr. Benson) has done, on June 18, when he introduced his budget, and when he quoted the gross national product and other figures as arguments.

So, I think that I will not be departing from the Standing Orders when trying later on to show, regarding clauses 109 and 110, what I intend to recommend to this government. Since we have no opportunity of moving amendments to legislations, I hope, Mr. Chairman, that we will at least have the opportunity of bringing forward some arguments. This is what I am doing and I am convinced that, as the Chair has just said, I am perfectly in order.

I was saying that the efficiency of farmers in 1970 had reached a level of 177, compared with 100 in 1961. On the basis of 100 in 1961, the efficiency rate of manufacturing industry reached 140 and that of non-manufacturing industry, 127.

Farmers and workers having made considerable effort to contribute through their work to the increase of the gross national product, they have shown they are serious and efficient. Should Canadians get greater benefit from the national product? I think so. To allow them to do so, they must be given more purchasing power. That can be achieved in two ways: by salary increases or greater profits, or still by lower taxes.

In the case that concerns us, clauses 109 and 110 aim at amending the tax legislation by increasing the basic exemption. I entirely agree with the government about that proposal. However, I think it is not going far enough considering the great possibilities I have just outlined regarding the gross national product.

Now men's work, as a whole, that is national production, is not meant to keep on adding to the wealth of a small group of citizens but rather to ensure the well-being to all. In my opinion a society is not just if it tends to condemn a great many of those we call proletarians to be without any other property than their arms, and to be always threatened by a refusal of employment in times of unemployment or by a considerable reduction of income in cases of sickness or accident. Then, more and more, the number of those who do not own any property increases on account of the tax burden.

This is why I strongly urge the government to clearly grasp the scope of our arguments which, as far as I am concerned, I do not bring in on a sudden impulse, but from a sense of duty because I know in what situation thousands of families find themselves. I am personally aware of that situation and every day we receive representations, requests from people asking us to see that the tax burden is lessened in order to allow the Canadian family to develop.

I cannot understand how some people will not admit that it takes at the very least an income of \$5,000 free of tax for an average family to live in normal conditions. I am speaking of the income tax that we are discussing right now.

I know that married couples have to pay a number of other taxes, it is a normal thing, but as far as income tax goes, in view of the immense possibilities of Canada, of

the considerable increase of the national product, it is now possible to lower the contribution made by this category of people, by raising the level of exemptions.

Are we really aware of the fact that the government is asking the people to live in poverty in an affluent society? Our country is rich in many ways. I was given, a moment ago, a document which is not very old; it is dated October 25, and entitled "The National Conference on Law and Poverty". The conference will be held in Ottawa from October 28 to 30.

It offends a number of members when someone reminds the government that there is inexcusable poverty in Canada. It riles them. They say that it should not be mentioned.

Mr. Chairman, this conference on law and poverty is organized by people who are interested in the welfare of the population, among others a group of lawyers who call themselves the defenders of the poor, and it is sponsored by a section of the Canadian Law Professors Association seeking justice for the poor.

I did not have time to read the communiqué, for it has just come to my attention, but it seems that it was by an act of God that this document appeared on my desk at the very moment when I was about to champion the rights of these elements of the population.

Mr. Chairman, I have known the distress of not even having a 3-cent stamp to send a letter to my mother. I remember the hurt and that is why, today, being called upon to speak for those people, I discharge my duty by saying what must be said.

Mr. Speaker, this is what being underprivileged means. There are underprivileged people in Canada, just as there are in Europe, Asia and Africa. We just have to open our eyes to see where they are. We only need to visit our cities and see those retarded children for whom we are asked to provide more financial assistance so that they may adapt to Canadian society.

When we see, as I did last Sunday, Richelieu clubs organizing suppers in order to try and raise funds to assist underprivileged children, we realize that people are really willing to help the underprivileged in Canada.

We only need to open our eyes to see unemployed people who have to make do with the miserable pittance which they get from welfare, and yet who would like to work. Last Saturday, of 12 people who called at my office, 11 were asking for work.

• (3:30 p.m.)

People want to work, Mr. Chairman! But in order to give them the opportunity to work we will have to give a new impetus to the economy, to further the sale of our products so that the industries in turn can get going again and hire those people.

Mr. Chairman, that is the reason why I insist so much on putting the basic exemption for married couples at \$5,000, because Canada can do it. Otherwise I would say: Let us tighten our belts! But, since Canada can do it—we know that, because the Prime Minister said so on the air—we must do something.

Mr. Chairman, that is my suggestion in connection with sections 109 and 110 in favour of families that do their share.