

*Excise Tax Act*

food, homes and buildings. This excise tax hits us in a very discriminatory fashion. We not only have to pay for the discrepancy in prices between our part of the province and others, but we have to put up with other actions by this government which can only be described as iniquitous.

We can think of the people in Elliot Lake, for instance, who risk their lives in the mines. I do not think any member of parliament would like that experience; there is nothing enjoyable about it. These people, who do so much for the productivity of the country, are the first to feel the brunt of this kind of tax. If this government were worth its salt, it would remove this iniquitous tax and go home for a holiday. We are quite prepared to stay here, however. The moose season in Nickel Belt opens on October 15.

**An hon. Member:** When is the bull season?

**Mr. Rodriguez:** The hon. member for St. Catharines (Mr. Parent) is worried about going fishing in the Welland Canal, but he might as well forget about it; he is going to be here for a while. The moose season and December 25 will come along, but if this government had any courage at all surely its backbenchers would be putting pressure on the Minister of Finance (Mr. Turner) to withdraw this bill. He is holding up the holidays and creating hardship for many constituents.

My party was opposed to the measure when it was announced on the night of the budget, and we stand opposed to it now. As the representative of the people of Nickel Belt, it would not inconvenience me if this House continues to sit. The inconvenience caused by this ten cents excise tax is greater for my constituents than for me to stay here through the summer and give up two months of sunshine. I am prepared to stand in this House and continue with this bill until the government withdraws it.

If the backbenchers on the Liberal side would show some courage, we might get some action. They do not have to feel they are parting company with their minister; they would be acting in the best interests of their constituents, and it is important they remember that. People sometimes believe they can do these things between elections and the people will forget about them. I hope to be around when the next election is called, to remind the people that the Liberal Party instituted this excise tax. I repeat, I am prepared to stay here all summer, all fall and all winter until this government—

● (1620)

**An hon. Member:** The hon. member is holding up the bill.

**Mr. Rodriguez:** Yes, I know the hon. member wants to go away on holidays. He made a down payment on a trailer and wants to go on a trip. But I am prepared to stay here all fall and all winter. I want to keep the government's frontbenchers sitting in this House. The hon. lady opposite can forget her fishing trip. As I said, my constituents will be inconvenienced far more by this tax than I shall by staying here, if I must, through the heat of the summer. I tell you, I am prepared to stay here.

**An hon. Member:** Yes, and holiday in the winter.

[Mr. Rodriguez.]

**Mr. Rodriguez:** The hon. member can speak on the bill. If the hon. member for Vancouver-Kingsway (Mrs. Holt) opposes the bill, let her stand up and tell her constituents she opposes this excise tax. My party will stay here and fight this excise tax bill right down to the wire. I hear hon. members commenting. I know that the hon. member for Vancouver-Kingsway is prepared to stay here. If she opposes this bill, why does she not rise and say so—put her remarks on the record? As I say, I am prepared to stay here all summer debating this bill or until such time as the government is prepared either to withdraw it or hoist it—put it off until 1999. That is the only fair way to deal with this kind of measure.

In closing, I urge hon. members to consider seriously putting pressure on the Minister of Finance to withdraw this bill.

**Some hon. Members:** Question.

**Mr. Les Benjamin (Regina-Lake Centre):** Mr. Speaker, the other night I said I wanted to say something more on this bill. As the House did not see fit to extend my time, I am pleased to take the opportunity today of adding to what I have said.

**Mr. Boulanger:** Don't say what you said the other day.

**Mr. Benjamin:** I have news for the hon. member. I hope he will listen as carefully as he listened the other evening; I hope my remarks will influence his views on this legislation. Surely the Minister of Finance (Mr. Turner) by now is totally convinced that this is the wrong way to raise the revenue which we agree he needs to meet the cost of the oil compensation fund. Surely speeches from all sides of the House have convinced him that he should use some other method to raise the \$350 million for this year and the \$525 million he will need next year and years thereafter. He should use some other way which is fairer to Canadians in all walks of life.

The other night I made four alternate proposals. I suggested that the minister could levy more income tax from individuals, more from corporations, combine greater individual with greater corporation taxes, or he could impose a surcharge on individual income tax, a surcharge on corporate taxes, or a combination of both taxes. My final alternative was one which nobody else mentioned, a modestly low interest rate on deferred taxes. As of March 31 last, there was owing on the books of this country over \$7 billion in deferred taxes. If the minister were to access 7.5 per cent on those deferred taxes, he could collect more than the \$525 million he needs. That is a lower rate of interest than you can obtain for a house mortgage, an automobile loan or a consumer loan. In that way he could raise the revenue which the House agrees he needs.

The government is to impose a ten-cent tax per gallon on gasoline and the oil companies will charge another five cents a gallon, or more, when they increase prices. After the gasoline has gone through the hands of the wholesalers, bulk retailers and others it will cost between 18 and 22 cents per gallon more. That price is unfair and will impose a burden on people who can least afford it. Further, those who can afford the tax will be entitled to rebates. I appeal to hon. members opposite, in the name of fairmindedness, not to allow the bill to pass. It is intrinsic