

Excise Tax Act

regions, the East, the West, and the North, become extremely frustrated. There has been support given to the oil companies, and support to the grain farmers. That is fine. But those of us from the far west, the Pacific west, often are simply lumped into western Canada. That area in B.C. on the other side of Rocky Mountain Range is another part of the country that tends to be forgotten. That is one of the points I wish to make today.

This is a plea to my friends on the government benches, and a plea to the Minister in the Cabinet who is here, to give us consideration. Again, we are not asking for more than what is justly ours, but only that we get a fair break when it comes to support from the federal Government. I know that Members will say that we have the Western Development Fund. That is not broken out on a provincial basis—it is simply “The West” again. I wish to make the point that there are two wests: there is the traditional plains west, and then there is the other that is called the Pacific west. We could probably link up British Columbia and the Yukon in that particular band, and I simply wish to make a case for consideration in those areas.

Today we are debating a Bill by which the Government plans to impose a whole regime of new taxes on Canadians. Canadians have had the biscuit when it comes to increased taxes. For the last four years, as one of the many spokespersons for the New Democratic Party I have stood in my place on regular occasions and have outlined why we oppose these continuous increases in taxes.

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Personal taxes keep going up and new hidden taxes are continuously imposed upon new products. We see that products such as dog food, cat food, kitty litter, snack foods, and so on are to be taxed. I suppose that one cannot make a case for not taxing kitty litter if products such as bird seed and so on are to be taxed. However, is it necessary for the Government to tax canary seed, cat food, dog food, kitty litter, snack food, pop, and so on?

Some Hon. Members: Why not?

Mr. Riis: I hear some Hon. Members yelling, “Why not?” I will tell them why not. It is because I think we are nickel and diming people to death. We are now saying to the kids who eat snack foods and have pets that we will tax their special food and their pet food when there is no need to do so.

The reason I say that there is no need is that the Government has conveniently overlooked a whole range of revenue opportunities. Once again I ask the question, and beg for someone on the government benches to stand up and explain, why the Government feels that it is a necessary and a good thing to allow 60,000 profitable corporations not to pay even a penny in income tax. Some 60,000 profitable corporations do not even pay a penny in income tax. They are not the Mom and Pop shops, the hair salons, or the welding shops. They are Cadillac Fairview, the Bank in Montreal in some years, Shell Canada, and General Motors, the giants with hundreds of

millions of dollars in profit that do not pay even a single penny in income tax. This does not say anything about the number of companies which pay \$20 or \$200 in income tax. There are tens of thousands of companies in that category, and other profitable companies which pay \$50 per year.

It is tragic that the Government of Canada in some years says that a young man or woman who is a teller in the Royal Bank of Canada will pay more income tax than the entire Royal Bank of Canada. Is that fair? It is also tragic when it says that a young man who pumps gas for Shell Canada will pay more income tax in some years than the entire Shell Canada. Is that fair? People are asking whether it is fair.

Why does the Government allow it to happen? Even Ronald Reagan in the United States said that it was unfair. He said that it was not right to have large, powerful multinational corporations paying no income tax when they make all kinds of profits. He said that they should pay a fair, basic tax and brought in a minimum corporate tax. He said to the corporations that if they used up all the loopholes and ended up paying no tax at all it was unfair and that they had to pay at least 20 per cent.

If we had the same system in Canada—and it is not an uncommon event; most countries have a minimum corporate tax—we would be collecting billions of dollars of taxes that we do not even begin to collect now. I remind the House of the situation back in the 1950s.

When we looked at the revenue obtained by the federal Government from the people of Canada in personal taxes and special taxes like those on gasoline and so on—the hidden sales taxes—and when we looked at the taxes collected from corporations, we found that it was about 50-50. About 50 per cent of the taxes came from corporations and 50 per cent came from the people. Over the years of successive Conservative and Liberal Governments, the breakdown has been shifted so that 82 per cent of the taxes collected by the federal Government comes from people and only 18 per cent comes from corporations.

What is bad about it is that so much of it is hidden. People do not even know they are paying the taxes. I refer to something as simple as filling up a car with gasoline. Now that some companies show the tax breakdown, we realize how much of the cost is simply a reflection of the hidden taxes put on by federal and provincial Governments.

Let us look at the revenues collected by Canada from hidden sales taxes. They account for about 35 per cent of all revenues. Most western industrialized nations average out to about 29 per cent. In other words, Canada is at the top of the list in terms of gouging citizens through hidden national sales taxes.

What is the Government's plan? Is it to cut back on taxes and to introduce a fairer and more just corporate tax system? No. It will levy a national sales tax on every Canadian, presumably after the next election campaign. For the first time in Canada it would impose a national sales tax on goods and