

*Excise Tax Act*

In the case of the iron mine at Dane, about 20 miles from Kirkland Lake, 70 townships were frozen. No building could take place except in the city of Kirkland Lake. I have no objection to that. However, if a person has to travel 20 miles to work, and that is close, they should be allowed a rebate, not of all their expenses, but on a portion of that gasoline which can be directly attributed to transportation to and from work.

Many people in the tri-town area work in Temagami, a 60-mile trip one way, a 120 miles round trip. This involves a sizeable expenditure for these people. Why shouldn't they be allowed to write it off? If they do not own a car and if they cannot get to their jobs, they are unemployed. There is no public transport. There is no reason why part of their motoring expenses should not be written off in the same way that tax concessions are given to a businessman. These people use their cars exactly as a salesman does, that is, to get to their place of business. Surely we can devise a system whereby they can write off at least some portion of their travel expenses.

● (1650)

Since we have got into the field of subsidies, may I say that the general public across Canada does not realize we are subsidizing Quebec and the maritimes. They are not aware that a line is supposed to exist through the Ottawa Valley. They are not aware of this because it is only recently we have been subsidizing Quebec and the maritimes. Before that it was they who were getting cheap oil products—they were buying oil products offshore cheaper than we could buy them in our western areas. Today the situation is different and gasoline in Quebec and the maritimes has to be subsidized. I can recall, though, when it was cheap—and if it was not cheap then someone was hosing the people of those provinces.

The Golden Eagle Company was one of the first companies to ship in offshore oil and, incidentally, every obstacle was placed in the way of Golden Eagle putting its products on sale across the Ottawa Valley line—the Diefenbaker line. Now the shoe is on the other foot and it is the people east of the line who have to be subsidized. Sure, we want to provide eastern Canada with some kind of equality, but any method used ought to be fair to all the people. It is they who are making the payments and it seems to me the ten cents which is being charged constitutes, in the main, a retrograde step. It is a retrograde step in all cases except where pleasure is involved. And in a nation which values recreation and leisure as highly as any people in the world, even in those areas where we are using automobiles for pleasure, I believe some equality should exist, and I suggest that this ten cents tax is not fair to all our people and is not being applied equally across the board.

I would strongly recommend to all dealers in gasoline that they put a sign on their gas pumps showing how much the federal tax is, how much the provincial tax is, and how much the actual gasoline costs. I should like to see such a sign placed on the tanks because in many areas the taxes amount to more than the product.

Any government which decides to put on a tax only to get money out of the misery of the people who are totally dependent on this product, a product which in many ways

is a basic necessity, like bread, or milk, or medical attention, must bear the responsibility. It is a tax which is unfairly applied if its only purpose is to bring in money. This holds true at least until the day comes when there is an alternative form of transportation—economic public transportation universally available.

It is strange how many people in Ottawa think that public transportation is available everywhere. I would say that thousands of people have been disqualified from receiving unemployment insurance benefits in my area during the past 15 years because they answered the question which reads "Is transportation available?" in the negative because there was no transportation which would get them to a job and back again.

There is a definite need for conservation, of course. It would have been much better if Ontario, rather than getting into a fight with the Minister of Finance had sat down with the minister and discussed how gasoline supplies might best be conserved. We are not only talking about gasoline. We are talking about heating fuel for the coming winter and for years to come. We are talking about long term agreements with the United States which we shall probably have to honour to our own discomfort.

If the provincial government and the federal government had wished to be fair to the people, conservation would have begun with a subsidy of sizeable magnitude to those automobiles which consume least gasoline, cars that can get 20 or 25 miles to the gallon. Other cars should be subject to a penalty. People who drive cars which are capable of getting reasonable mileage should be given a break, not the North American automobile industry which is dependent upon salesmanship to sell a product which has been detrimental to this nation and to the future of our energy supplies. I was shocked to hear the Ontario government say that for an election period it would reduce the price of those large American cars just for the sake of political advantage.

This place is becoming redundant, Madam Speaker. People are no longer looking to Ottawa or to Toronto or the other provincial capitals for an answer to their problems. I do not think the Minister of Finance really faced the problem he said he was trying to face in relation to gasoline taxes. If he did, he spent no time whatsoever trying to convince people across Canada that equality of price, and equality of access to supply throughout the nation were a valuable contribution to the spirit of confederation itself. His failure to do so is one of the reasons this place is becoming redundant. I can certainly say that the Ontario mini-budget, as a direct reaction to the federal budget, did nothing along those lines either.

[Translation]

**Mr. Adrien Lambert (Bellechasse):** Madam Speaker, I know most hon. members would like the House to adjourn so that all members of the House could take advantage of the few fine summer days left. My remarks will therefore be very brief.

I thought however that it was my duty, considering the number of letters I got from workers who need their cars to go to work in the forest, to ask the government on their behalf to consider alternative sources of revenue to get the funds required for the administration of our country.