

*Excise Tax*

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Such a motion at this stage would need the unanimous consent of the House. Is there unanimous consent?

**Mr. Fisher:** Mr. Speaker, I presume it would need unanimous consent to be debated, or would it need unanimous consent to be passed?

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** It would need unanimous consent to be presented to the House at this time for debate.

**Mr. Fisher:** Then I would certainly agree with that.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Is the Hon. Member for Prince Albert (Mr. Hovdebo) rising on a point of order?

**Mr. Hovdebo:** Yes, Mr. Speaker. Unanimous consent usually requires the courtesy of asking the third Party in the House for unanimous consent. This was not done. Under those circumstances I am very loth to give unanimous consent.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** There does not appear to be unanimous consent. Certainly it is the understanding of the Chair that such a motion could not be put without unanimous consent. Is the Hon. Member for Prince Albert standing his ground and refusing unanimous consent or has he had second thoughts?

**Mr. Hovdebo:** Mr. Speaker, I am speaking on this motion and I was quite willing to speak in favour of it. I just required the courtesy of being asked for unanimous consent in a case like this. That consent was not asked for and I was just making that point. I will give the unanimous consent provided I am given the opportunity to speak to the motion.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** The Chair is asking for unanimous consent. The Chair obviously cannot be responsible for private negotiations that might or might not have taken place. But in this case there is unanimous consent for the Hon. Member for Waterloo (Mr. MacLean), seconded by the Hon. Member for Capilano (Mr. Huntington), to move that the motion be withdrawn and the subject matter thereof referred to the Standing Committee on Finance, Trade and Economic Affairs.

**Mr. Stan J. Hovdebo (Prince Albert):** Mr. Speaker, I wish to thank the Hon. Member for Oxford (Mr. Halliday) for bringing forward this motion. In doing so he has opened up the whole area of the treatment of disasters in the country as well as another area which may be more important, namely the whole issue of tax concessions.

From reading the Member's motion and listening to the debate so far, I recognize that he did not intend to be too confining in his motion. The Hon. Member made the suggestion that it related to buildings and would only extend to repair and replacement of buildings. He did so by having the relief attached only to the excise tax levied on building materials. That makes it a very narrow approach and, as are many taxes and remission of taxes, it would also be regressive in that often the person most able to pay would benefit the most from this remission—the individual who may not have needed the help.

Granted, most natural disasters will do the greatest damage to the most expensive houses, if you wish, but that does not mean the owner should get the most help.

● (1740)

Possibly to overcome that criticism the remission should be taxable, but Members earlier in this debate, particularly on the Government side, indicated that such a process of even having a remission of taxes would be bureaucratically very difficult. Of course, if you were to have it taxable as well you would increase the bureaucracy. It might then be easier and more worth while to give a straight grant to people affected by a disaster.

Therefore, I would give general support to the principle of giving relief to disaster victims, particularly victims not covered in some other way. I would wish to have the Government study the methods—and the motion before us right at the moment does exactly that—to attempt to make them as progressive as possible.

We could spend a lot of time looking at disaster procedures in the country. They are fairly well documented. The processes of EMP and EMR and so on have been well covered. I imagine most Members who have been involved in community emergency treatment of disasters know well what goes on. Those procedures seem fairly adequate after an agreement is reached between a Province and the federal Government.

It is also possible that the suggestion made by the Hon. Member for Oxford (Mr. Halliday), which is remission of taxes, would help the quality and even the extent of the replacement that was necessary under this kind of disaster requirement.

However, if you look at the history of disaster relief in Canada, there are some amazing incongruities when the Government makes an attempt to provide an over-all answer to a requirement. I could give you a number of examples, Mr. Speaker. We only have a few more minutes and I am sure there are other Members who wish to speak. I believe the Hon. Member for Oxford is able to speak under these circumstances.

**Some Hon. Members:** Yes.

**Mr. Hovdebo:** Therefore I will go through this as quickly as possible. Right now in our present estimates we are talking about giving \$6.9 million of relief to farmers who had apple trees frozen in Ontario and Quebec in the last year. The requirement is very heavy but worth while, the \$6.9 million being used to restore orchards. Those same farmers could have frost damage every year for ten years which kills the fruit and yet never get any disaster relief unless their incomes fall below a certain level. Two years ago we had a very heavy drought in Saskatchewan which affected the quantity of feed for farmers' cattle. Many farmers were paid disaster relief. In my particular area one farmer living on one side of the road got \$5,000 worth of help but the fellow living across the road who experienced exactly the same kind of disaster got no help.