

Excise Tax Act

do certain jobs that people with sight presently do. However, to tax blind people further is to jeopardize the necessary service which guide-dogs provide and reduce their employment opportunities which are already extremely slim. It has been suggested by the Canadian Association of Guide-Dog Users that there be a tax rebate for blind people if they supply Revenue Canada with receipts for guide-dog expenses. This would be similar to a sales tax, rent, or property tax rebate given to people under Ontario tax law. The Minister of Finance responded by saying that he thought a tax reduction would be more appropriate. The problem is that 80 per cent of blind people cannot work or do not have jobs. If you do not have a job it is pretty tough to pay tax and therefore pretty tough to get a tax reduction. I suggest that although this is a small point with a limited number of people involved, it is symptomatic of a lack of regard by the Government for people who are poor.

● (1640)

[Translation]

I would like to say about the deficit generally that, last August, the Government prepared a study on the cost of tax concessions given to corporations and individual taxpayers.

Mr. Speaker, the amount is about \$30 billion to \$50 billion, according to the report tabled by the Minister of Finance in the Clark Government, when the Conservatives were in office. Curiously and interestingly enough, the tax relief to taxpayers—mostly rich ones—is roughly equal to Canada's deficit. If our tax system were really fair, we would not grant the same tax relief to major companies, multinationals, wealthy people, and foreign controlled corporations. We would give such tax relief only to selected groups and, Mr. Speaker, that is how we would begin to build a truly fair tax system. As an example, Mr. Speaker, I would quote a statement from the Minister of Finance to the Canadian Textile Foundation: "The average corporate tax rate in Canada is about 15 per cent instead of 36 per cent." Those are tax incentives, tax relief, that is what they did.

Mr. Speaker, I note that young girls and women who work in our chartered banks pay an average tax rate which is higher than the tax rate paid by their employers despite the fact that Canada's chartered banks have assets ranging all the way up to \$200 billion, \$300 billion and \$400 billion, that they are big corporations with a lot of financial clout. Yet ordinary people who work for the banks pay higher tax rates than their employers do. Mr. Speaker, there is something definitely unfair in that situation. Now, these small taxpayers with a yearly income of \$15,000 will have to pay \$140 more because of the increased sales tax which is provided for by this bill.

That is why, as members of the New Democratic Party, we are concerned about the Government's priorities. We question the priorities of any Government that believes it will create more jobs and improve the unemployment situation by giving corporations major tax breaks. That was the approach

favoured for the past 15 years by the Liberals, the Conservatives, the Quebec Liberals and the Parti Québécois. Quebec has made the same experience and it is not working, as unemployment remains extremely high. Governments will not accept our ideas and our efforts to make sure that low income people are not penalized by our tax system but benefit from it, and to set up a tax system which is fair, and not outright unfair as this one is for low income people.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments. The Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance (Mr. Lanthier).

Mr. Lanthier: Mr. Speaker, I feel quite indignant. Normally, we would not bother responding to the mass of fallacious reasoning we were served up here today, but I believe I ought to raise a few points because this week, I realized that people were watching the proceedings on television. In fact, they are doing so in all ridings in Canada, and especially in wonderful LaSalle. The people of LaSalle and Ville Émard are watching the proceedings of the House.

So I would like to raise a few points and first of all, I would advise New Democratic Party Members to let Quebecers get on with their election. We can take care of ourselves, we don't need any outside help, and I would advise them to mind their own business. The references they made to the election in Quebec—this is a matter that concerns Quebecers and does not concern Ontarians or the rest of Canada. So I would advise these people to please mind their own affairs since it is none of their business.

Second, Mr. Speaker, in referring to the little guy, the New Democratic Party seems to forget the taxation restructuring that was done in the last Budget. In fact, there are two specific points I would like to mention. First of all, please notice that in the remarks made by the Hon. Member for Ottawa-Centre (Mr. Cassidy), there was no reference to the minimum tax levied on people with high incomes. It is rather unusual that this particular tax was not mentioned. Throughout these comments on the little guy, it does come as a surprise that this particular item was not referred to. An oversight, no doubt. After all, they can hardly be expected to enumerate or criticize every single item.

Second, earlier there was also a reference to a potential loss, because they were talking about a loss; mind you, potential loss and loss are not the same . . . and this was in connection with tax restructuring and the child tax credit. They also forgot that in the last Budget, there was an element of unfairness because there were people earning between \$23,000 and \$26,000 who were paying less taxes than people earning between \$18,000 and \$23,000. What we did was restructure the tax system to make taxes progressive instead of regressive. At the time, there were all kinds of bandaid solutions introduced by the party then in power, which took away an allowance here and added a tax rebate there, and when it was