

Income Tax Act

P.Q. government is most unfortunate. When you have a government that is dedicated to breaking up the country by taking one province out of Canada, perhaps it is not surprising that it did not co-operate fully in this regard.

● (2032)

Nevertheless, I have great confidence in the minister's abilities to consult, negotiate and work out a very equitable and fair arrangement with the province, at least fair to the people of Quebec. The surprise to me is that opposition parties would support the separatist government in this approach, because it is obvious that the federal government were to allow that province these selective cuts for products that are produced primarily in that province, this would be a very disruptive factor across the country.

It has been made very clear that when consultation took place with the other provincial governments none of them were agreeable to selective tax cuts such as proposed by the province of Quebec. I am really surprised that opposition parties would support that government in this regard. Obviously this would have been unfair to the other provinces when they did not have that opportunity and had not agreed to such a proposal. It would have been a very disruptive force to have a sales tax for the province of Quebec that was not an across the board cut but singled in on textiles, footwear and furniture, many of which items are produced in that province. However, even that might have been possible had there been agreement with the other provinces; but the first three provincial governments the Minister of Finance discussed this proposal with all turned thumbs down, so it is obvious it would not have been acceptable to a majority of the provinces.

I believe the minister's proposal to return an equivalent amount of money to the taxpayers of the province of Quebec, whether this is done by way of direct payment or otherwise, is obviously the most fair way of handling the situation. It could and has been argued that if the province of Quebec was not willing to reduce its sales tax across the board in a non-discriminatory way, it should not be eligible for the tax reduction. I personally think the proposal the minister is making to return an equivalent amount to the taxpayers in the province of Quebec is most fair.

During the past several months leading up to this period we have witnessed a concerted attack by the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Clark) and the hon. member for York-Simcoe (Mr. Stevens) on the Minister of Finance, an attack often abusive, unreasonable and completely unfair. This culminated a couple of weeks ago in the charge that Liberal members, and even cabinet ministers, were speculating in the Canadian dollar. The Minister of Finance answered that very succinctly when he said simply to the hon. member for York-Simcoe to put up or shut up; to name names and spell out those people, or withdraw.

A week ago yesterday we had the opportunity of seeing that hon. member eat humble crow in the House, completely withdrawing his allegation. He had very little credibility before that episode, but he had even less when he finished. I do

[Mr. Foster.]

not think many hon. members over there stayed in the House that day, but whatever credibility that hon. member had left was stripped away by the Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce (Mr. Horner), who spoke immediately after and laid bare all the facts about the Bank of Western Canada and the unsavoury mess in that regard. The Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce laid out all the facts for everyone to see. I do not think it will be long, following this incident, before we see the shadow cabinet over there shuffled around.

An hon. Member: It will be shuffled from this side to that side.

Mr. Foster: Perhaps we will see the hon. member for York-Simcoe moved to another position.

The Leader of the Opposition likes to refer in very derogatory terms to the Minister of Finance as "that guy from Shawinigan Falls; that street fighter". I am sure everyone on this side of the House and most Canadians would rather have that street fighter from Shawinigan Falls than one of the Bay Street millionaires. I am sure everyone will not only want him to an even greater degree as Minister of Finance, but will trust him a darned sight more.

Mr. Bob Wenman (Fraser Valley West): Mr. Speaker, when listening to the comments of the last hon. member I had to check my Order Paper to make sure we were talking about Bill C-56. In fact, I even wondered if the hon. member was speaking about the same country I know something about and intend to speak about in my remarks.

The arguments in respect of Bill C-56 are becoming well known, not only in this chamber where they are repeated often enough, but as well among a growing number of Canadians who are demanding that the bill be withdrawn, the measure renegotiated and the bill redrafted.

This bill is a very special status bill. In fact, it is also a special, special status bill, a special status bill, a non-special status bill, and a very non-special status bill. If you live in the province of British Columbia it has very, very special status because not only do you receive the tax cut for six months, you receive it permanently courtesy of the B.C. government.

This bill has special status in Quebec because there the taxpayers are to get a cheque for \$100 in the mail.

An hon. Member: If they are rich enough.

Mr. Wenman: The bill has a non-special status in the province of Ontario and other provinces where the residents will receive only a temporary six-month tax cut; and it is a very, non-special status bill in the province of Alberta where the taxpayers in fact will receive nothing from this bill.

The capacity and the weight of a province's bargaining power has become the new criterion for federal-provincial relations. This is probably one of the most divisive pieces of legislation that I or any member of this House has seen during the last four years. It has been unanimously condemned by every governmental jurisdiction and agency in Canada, and I