

His Matter-Of-Conscience Vote Broke Party Ranks

York Simcoe MP John Roberts says he doesn't expect to be penalized in any way by the Liberal Party for breaking party ranks last week and voting for a Progressive Conservative amendment to the government's hate propaganda bill. The bill has since been passed by the House of Commons in the form proposed by the Trudeau Government.

"It was a straightforward question of conscience. On such questions members of Parliament are always free to vote as their conscience dictates," Mr. Roberts told

"The Liberal" in a telephone interview from his home office.

"I believe the bill sets a bad precedent by restricting the area of free speech in society. I believe the traditional liberal position over two centuries places an almost absolute priority on freedom of speech," said the young MP.

"It is necessary to allow people to say even horrible, wicked and cruel things, because in the long run in an open society the truth emerges through discussion and controversy."

"I voted for the Tory amendment because I'm opposed to the legislation," he said. His action was a breaking of party ranks on a particular issue, but not a general break with the party.

"The amendment really 'guts' the legislation, takes out all but advocacy of genocide. It would eliminate the hate literature part of the bill," said MP Roberts.

Roberts Raps U.S. Tax Level Arguments

By HAROLD BLAINE

The rich five percent of the U.S. population owns half of all the property while the poor 50 percent of the population has only five percent of the property, John Roberts MP, York Simcoe said April 18 in Newmarket. He didn't have figures on the Canadian situation.

He was speaking during a public forum and panel discussion on the proposals contained in the controversial federal White Paper on Tax Reform.

He was answering a complaint from a member of the audience who was arguing against the proposal to shift the tax load a little off the backs of the lower-to-middle income group. The unidentified speaker from the audience alleged the tax proposals would be heavier on Canadians than on Americans in the professional and higher middle income group.

"This was what brought about MP Roberts' remark about the distribution of wealth in the U.S."

The meeting was attended by about 110 York Simcoe constituents.

Federal Minister Without Portfolio Herb Gray of Windsor attended the meeting with Mr. Roberts, and fielded some of the more technical questions. He has responsibilities in the finance department.

Chairman of the meeting was Michael Ronan of 317 Tower Crest Drive, Newmarket.

The three-man guest panel included Leonard Rosenberg, Aurora, chartered accountant; John Kudelka of Newmarket, stockbroker and dairy farm executive; and Tom McPherson, Aurora lawyer.

At one point panelist Kudelka remarked that the meeting was probably not attended by the large mass of people in the low-



HERBERT GRAY Defends White Paper

ed about the threat to personal freedom contained in the income tax act. He said the income tax inspector has powers no other person in society has. He can call in a citizen summarily, refuse to let him bring along his lawyer, and interrogate him.

This enforcement system bypasses the normal system of justice. It costs \$1,000 to get simply to the first court of appeal. Even then the citizen is assumed guilty beforehand and must pay the taxes levied even though the levy is being appealed. If he wins, he only gets three percent interest on the money held in the meantime by the government, he said.

Mr. Roberts agreed this kind of thing was undesirable and must be looked at.

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half of the income scale. These were the people who would benefit from the tax proposals, but they weren't being heard from. "How can we get a consensus when they're not here?" he asked.

This resulted in a lady from Simcoe being the first member of the audience to speak up during the question period.

She said she hadn't planned to say anything, but after Mr. Kudelka's remark she felt she must.

The lady said she came to Canada from another country where the government didn't care about the fate of the low income people. Where the streets weren't paved, where it wasn't safe to go out at night, and where there wasn't freedom to speak out about taxes.

She said she was mighty glad to have the freedom and opportunity to publicly discuss taxation with a member of the government and to speak out about her feelings.

She said her husband earns \$83 a week. But a loaf of bread cost 27 cents, just the same as the richer people who were complaining about paying a little more taxes.

Beef steak cost them \$1.30 a pound, just the same as it cost the high income professional people who were complaining. But we like to eat steak once in a while too, she said.

This lady said she and her husband would be mighty glad to get an additional income tax exemption, and she didn't think it was going to hurt somebody with an income of \$15,000 or \$20,000 a year to pay something like an added \$300 taxes.

She said she couldn't understand it when she heard people making \$20,000 a year complaining they will have to pay \$300 more. In many lower income families the women have to go out to work to keep going, she said.

Remarking on the complaints about estate taxes, she said, "If I have an estate over \$50,000 my children will be glad to have it to pay tax on."

Mr. Rosenberg said Benson's White Paper and the public dialogue idea were really a pretence, a farce and a public hoax. Sending a parliamentary committee around the country was a waste of travel funds amounting to many thousands of dollars.

Minister Without Portfolio Gray answered that the complaints were usually on the other side, with most people complaining there isn't enough direct contact and dialogue between the public and the cabinet. It was unusual to hear a complaint the Ministers were travelling too much, he said.

Mr. Gray said the old traditional way of introducing tax changes was by way of policy papers attached to the budget. The changes were fixed and unchangeable in advance when introduced in that way.

The public dialogue on the tax changes this time was not just for fun. It was hard work on top of regular duties for government members. He was in Vancouver Monday, in Toronto and Newmarket Wednesday, scheduled for London Friday, and had a meeting back at home in Windsor Monday.

Mr. Gray said he wouldn't be doing this if there wasn't a serious effort being made to listen to the public.

"This is a new departure in forming tax policy in Canada. It's so new that informed people still have a certain degree of skepticism. The proof will be the results of this dialogue process and the final legislation," said the Windsor Minister.

Mr. Roberts said, "We've tried to do something new with this White Paper." The idea was to involve the public and not just present them with an accomplished fact.

"That's what participatory democracy is all about," he said.

The members of the House of Commons Finance Committee have cancelled their vacation plans, because they want to hear what the public has to say, said MP Roberts, who is a member of this committee.

"If a government really wanted to push these proposals through without regard for objections, then the last thing they would do is hold a long, drawn out series of hearings. This would be an extraordinarily stupid thing to do unless they wanted to hear the public," he said, adding that for good or ill he had supported the idea of public dialogue on tax reform before the legislation was drafted.

"I also don't like wasting my time. I wouldn't spend July and August travelling the country for public hearings if it were merely a masquerade," he said.

Mr. Roberts said in his opinion one of the things tax reform must do is reduce the burden on low income groups. The burden on the low income group has been steadily growing ever the years, he said.

He said the finance committee was going to have to look at the way capital gains and estate taxes work together. Especially in the case of farmers

the White Paper didn't deal sufficiently in depth with the farm situation.

He had just met with the Ontario Federation of Agriculture delegation. Its members generally supported the White Paper, but had some very valid criticism on certain points, he said. He is also hoping to meet soon with York and Simcoe County farm group representatives.

Mr. McPherson was concerned.

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The biggest bargains in many a moon were picked up by seven area residents at the Canadian Tire Associate Store, located at 70 Yonge Street North, Richmond Hill, over the past two weeks.

The big bargains were part of the celebration of the local store's 30th anniversary.

Jack Corbett, 237 Alsace Road, Richmond Hill, was able to purchase a CGE Electric Lawn Mower for 30¢ when the number on the third section of the April 2 edition of "The Liberal" matched one of the numbers posted in the store.

Ray Kerr, 219 Rosemar Gardens, Richmond Hill, got two glass-belted polyester tires for 60¢ when his number proved to be a lucky one.

R. Todd, 152 May Avenue, Richvale, acquired a Cougar bicycle for 30¢ when his number matched a posted one.

Buying CGE electric kettles for 30¢ each were Joseph Gratton, 223 Ashlar Road, Richmond Hill; Arthur Holding, King City; Wayne Long, 40 Starlight Crescent, Richmond Hill and Harvey Wyatt, Anglin Drive, Markham Township.

Mr. McPherson was concerned.



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