

I apologize for interrupting Senator Roblin, and I appreciate the fact the Deputy Leader of the Government is here, but, in all frankness, there is no Cabinet minister present.

Senator Frith: Honourable senators, I know that Senator Muir, being an experienced parliamentarian, realizes that ministers have to plan their time, and they cannot always be sure when a bill in which they are interested might be debated. Very often ministers are at a disadvantage in terms of their responsibilities. I am sure that Senator Olson would like to hear Senator Roblin's intervention because they have shared many exchanges during Question Period. The difficulty is that a minister can always plan his time for Question Period but he cannot always do it in connection with an Order of the Day that might be spoken to after Question Period.

I presume the minister had another obligation to fulfil. I know that Senator Perrault felt that he should appear at this afternoon's meeting of the Standing Senate Committee on Health, Welfare and Science, because the Honourable Lloyd Axworthy is a witness. Possibly that is why Senator Flynn, the Leader of the Opposition, is also not in the chamber. Perhaps he too wishes to be present at the committee meeting where a rather important bill is to be considered. I do not know what other obligation Senator Argue had, but I assume that he faced a similar problem. I am sure that I can honestly and safely say on their behalf that they are sorry that they have to miss Senator Roblin's important intervention. I am sure that all of them, particularly Senator Olson and Senator Austin, will take the opportunity to read the honourable senator's speech in *Hansard*.

Hon. Eric Cook: They are playing softball.

Senator Muir: I thank the Deputy Leader of the Government for his response, but it is a very weak excuse. Senator Austin is so important that I had forgotten he was a Cabinet minister sitting in this chamber.

Hon. D. G. Stewart: Oh, oh!

Senator Muir: I wish Senator Stewart would stop his—

Senator Stewart: Can't I have a little yawn once in a while?

Senator Muir:—grunting, groaning and snorting up there on the back benches.

Senator Stewart: I am waiting to hear the speech.

Senator Muir: We are going to hear Senator Roblin's speech, and Senator Stewart will hear a damned good one. Is the Deputy Leader of the Government telling me that Senator Olson did not know that this matter was going to be debated today? He is the man to whom questions are posed, regarding economic development, gas prices, oil prices, and all those mega-projects. He is the guy with the mega-mouth, talking all the time about mega-projects that are falling apart. I appreciate what the Deputy Leader of the Government has said, but, I repeat, it is a very weak excuse.

Senator Roblin: Honourable senators, if I might intervene, as being one of the parties involved, I would like to continue my speech.

Some Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

Senator Roblin: I much appreciate Senator Muir's efforts to drum up an audience for me, but I remembered that many are called but few are chosen. I believe the chosen must be here because, God knows, we called on Senator Olson to stay, but he did not choose to; he left anyway.

● (1450)

So, Senator Muir, the chosen are here and we will just have to do the best we can with them. Thank you for your kind attention.

Senator Muir: I am sorry that I interrupted.

Senator Roblin: Do not be sorry because it enables me to say twice what I was going to say anyway. Now I can say it all over again. We were talking about the made-in-Canada price for gasoline, and I was illustrating to this chamber what had happened to the made-in-Canada taxes in recent times.

Let me tell you what that means in terms of the person who buys a gallon of gasoline—if he is legally entitled still to use that offensive description of a quantity of liquid—in the city of Winnipeg. The last time I looked, the price was \$1.91, and His Honour the Speaker *pro tem* has probably had the same experience as I have.

If I had gone to St. Paul, which is the largest American city close to us, on April 21—because prices change all the time I must give the date—I could have got the same quantity, one imperial gallon, for \$1.83 Canadian. That is the made-in-the-United States price for oil and gas as opposed to the made-in-Canada price for oil and gas. How we were adjured to support those who believe that a made-in-Canada price would be advantageous and beneficial to the people of this country, and to let the Liberal Party of Canada devise a formula to bring this magic into effect, is beyond me. Now we see the result, and it seems to me that it is really going to be difficult to claim that the made-in-Canada price in oil has been particularly advantageous to the people of this country.

What it really has done, and let us not overlook this fact, is that it has enabled the federal government to gather into its revenue and into its treasury the money it needs to continue on its—I won't say reckless financial course because I do not believe in strong language,—on its improvident policy and its improvident pattern.

In the case of heating oil, the situation is even worse. In December 1981 heating oil carried a tax of 10 cents, and in March 1982 it carries a tax of 40 cents, and God knows where it is going from there. When one considers the impact of the cost of heating in Canada, one has to be impressed by the manifest questionability of this particular tax and its inflationary impact. Maybe you do not have to drive your car in this country, but by the Lord Harry you have to heat your house, and when a tax is going up by four times, from 10 cents to 40 cents, in the course of a couple of years under a made-in-Canada energy policy, one has to comment on the inflationary effect.

But taxes, of course, are only the tip of the iceberg when we are looking at this energy policy that we have now. What we