

Oral Questions

Mr. Crosbie: He made it all possible. This raid on the pockets of Canadians was made possible by the Leader of the NDP.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Crosbie: They cannot take it, Madam Speaker.

My question is for the Minister of Finance. The minister has predicted that food prices this year will go up 10.1 per cent and next year 12 per cent. He predicted also that energy prices will go up 15.6 per cent this year and 21.9 per cent next year. Is it correct that the minister is going to have an advertising campaign to persuade the public that food and energy prices have not gone up 12 per cent and 21 per cent and that the government will be taxing or taking revenue away from them \$40 billion less than they think is being done? Will there be an advertising campaign, and will it feature the goose flying around while being plucked?

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Hon. Allan J. MacEachen (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance): Madam Speaker, I do not contemplate an advertising campaign to sell the budget; I think it will sell itself over the long term. But I would remind the hon. member, who is concerned about inflation, that the projections which he showed in his budget for next year and the following year with respect to inflation were higher than the projections which I have shown. The lower projection which I have shown is in good measure a result of not imposing the excise tax on gasoline.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Crosbie: Madam Speaker, the minister claims that his projection for inflation next year is lower than mine; 10.2 per cent is his projection. The facts will show whether or not the minister is correct in his projections. By the way, we know that his goose is being cooked while it is being plucked.

If the budget which was presented last December, against which the minister voted together with his friends from the NDP, had been passed, there would have been a \$575 million tax relief for projected home owners in Canada this year and a \$1,200 million tax relief for them next year, together with another \$500 million in relief to everybody, particularly those who are investing \$21,000, through an energy tax credit. Does the minister propose to carry out the Prime Minister's campaign commitment and that of his party to assist home owners and lower income people in Canada through these means at some point during the year? Is he keeping these announcements as a surprise financial statement later this year?

Mr. MacEachen: Madam Speaker, I am glad the hon. member has referred to projections because it is worth underlining the fact that these are projections. As he knows, some of his projections were proved to be false because of developing events, and some of mine may have the same fate. I do not think it has anything to do with the honesty of the projections;

rather, it has to do with the uncertainty of projecting into the future.

I am surprised that the hon. member raises the spectre of that ill-fated mortgage plan which was brought before the House and which the government failed to pass, although it could have had it passed before its defeat last December. We told the Canadian people that we were against that, and we made it clear that we have no intention of introducing an inequitable plan of that kind.

TAX ON EXPORTS OF NATURAL GAS—GOVERNMENT POSITION

Miss Pat Carney (Vancouver Centre): Madam Speaker, my question is addressed to the Minister of Finance whose debut on the Jack Webster show I watched with interest this morning. Since 30,000 British Columbians signed a petition opposing the imposition of a natural gas tax, and since they will be relieved to know that the minister so took their concerns to heart that he rewrote the budget, I should like to ask the minister the following question: When is the tax on the export of natural gas not a natural gas export tax when it is applied to the export of natural gas?

Hon. Allan J. MacEachen (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance): Madam Speaker, I noted the petitions which were laid on the table in the House, and I noted the questions which were directed against an export tax on natural gas, a tax exclusively on the exportation of that gas.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

An hon. Member: At least blush, Allan.

Mr. MacEachen: That is the attack that was made, and I notice that hon. members are now attempting, rather belatedly, to shift their ground. I want to assure you, Madam Speaker, that we have levied a tax on natural gas produced and consumed in Canada and produced and consumed in the United States. It is a tax on all natural gas. Are hon. members suggesting that we should levy a tax on Canadian consumers and not levy it on American consumers? Is that their policy?

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Miss Carney: Madam Speaker, I direct my supplementary to the Minister of Finance. I am sure that the people in British Columbia who will be paying 50 per cent more for their natural gas heating next winter will be warmed by his response.

Since the minister states in his budget papers that he designed his national energy program to "be particularly helpful to B.C.", and since the minister's natural gas export tax will deprive British Columbia of revenues estimated at \$30 million annually up to \$130 million potentially, could the minister define what he means by "particularly helpful"?

Mr. MacEachen: Yes, Madam Speaker, I would be glad to define "particularly helpful". The first thing I would say is that in response to the concerns which were expressed in the