

The Budget—Mr. Regan

Mr. Regan: If he had had the strength to stand up to his minister of finance he might still be in office. If he had stopped to realize, when that 18-cent excise tax was proposed on a commodity which was going to rise in price tremendously anyhow, how punitive that was, he might still be in office. If he had stopped to realize that his minister of finance, the hon. member for St. John's West (Mr. Crosbie), came from a group of merchants in Water Street, St. John's, who are not noted for their compassion, which is something my ancestors in rural Newfoundland could well attest to, then he might have stood up to him. The cold hard fact is different. For him to say that the budget presented by the Minister of Finance was mindless and heartless, when he had supported and condoned a budget that put a special tax on a commodity that was rising in cost at any time shows that he takes a very unusual position.

● (1610)

I want to make two or three more remarks about his comments, Mr. Speaker. First of all, he makes an effort to link the NDP with the Liberals. He does this at a time when his friends in the Conservative party, like Mr. Buchanan, the Premier of Nova Scotia, have just appointed the leader of the New Democratic Party in Nova Scotia to one of the top civil service positions in the province—the sensitive position of director of intergovernmental affairs and deputy minister.

Mr. Baker (Nepean-Carleton): How could he have overlooked you?

Mr. McDermid: He took care of you, too.

Mr. Baker (Nepean-Carleton): That is one job you won't get.

Mr. Regan: Well, you win some and you lose some,—and some are rained out.

I was distressed by the essence of what the Right Hon. Leader of the Opposition said when he talked about the rigs probably going south as a result of the financing policies outlined in the budget. The stark statement he makes is that we should pay more to the multinationals—that we should bribe them with this nation's destiny in order to have them remain here rather than develop policies on the basis that we are using at the present time.

An hon. Member: That is not what he said.

Mr. Regan: Oh, there were other things too. No wonder they are squealing over there, Mr. Speaker, because that hurts. When they start squealing, you know it hurts.

An hon. Member: That is not what he said.

Mr. Regan: Let them continue to squeal, but preferably not so loud.

The other thing he talks about is prices. The two biggest distortions that they have practised over the past ten months with great energy are, first, that there was something in their budget that was going to contribute to self-sufficiency which

does not exist in the Liberal platform. They are unable to say what it is. The distinction is that they were going to pay vast rewards to the multinational companies to take the money out of this country for oil that has already been discovered and is already being produced. There are still incentives for new oil—just as good and even better incentives for Canadians, but they turn their backs on that.

The other distortion is that prices are comparable. Every time he tries to compare prices, he compares apples and oranges. He does not add the 18-cent excise tax nor does he say anything at all about the fact that under the previous minister of finance who came from St. John's West, at the end of the third year they would move to 75 per cent of world price—a \$10 hike or in all probability more by that time—and by 1984 they would move to 85 per cent of world price. He seems to forget those footnotes.

On this general subject, Mr. Speaker, I want to say that I thought the Right Hon. Leader of the Opposition might have something new to say. Instead, he spoke—and it was not a question of speaking as an Albertan or a Canadian but more like a man who was speaking as an Albertan first rather than as a Canadian first.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Paproski: Come on now; that is awful.

Mr. Baker (Nepean-Carleton): You are going to need help from Buchanan.

Mr. Regan: Mr. Speaker, I want to say something about the Liberal budget and then I will have something more to say that may be of interest to my squealing friends.

This budget signifies our commitment to fiscal responsibility, and it calls upon those who have reaped the most from the Canadian economic society to make the greatest contribution.

It indicates our determination to make the most of our energy opportunities, and it fulfils the promises the Liberal party made in the election campaign.

The next point is that energy questions are integral to the economic performance and industrial development of this country. To ignore this fact is to be out of touch with reality.

Budget making is the most difficult part of the art of governing. The pleasure of governing is spending on worthwhile programs for the benefit of our people and the improvement of our country. The pain of governing is the difficult chore of collecting the money to carry out the programs; the arbitrary task of deciding who pays and how much. The necessity of government is doing this. The responsibility of government is doing it as equitably as possible with recognition of the burdens of individuals and industries; of protecting those who must be protected and, at the same time, of maintaining employment and incentive.

None of these goals is absolute; none can be achieved to the extent that all representatives of the people would wish. In our imperfect society, the art of governing is that of reaching those goals to the greatest degree that the resources of a country will