

Excise Tax Act

exemption? I suggest that such an exemption will reduce wage claims. Without it, they will be larger. Do you think that the ordinary man who cannot deduct his extra costs will consider our system fair and think he ought to support it in order to conserve petroleum? How can the minister's dual system claim merit or the allegiance of people who will be affected by the injustices so obviously built into the bill?

Workers must use automobiles. Many of us favour public transportation and hope that one day an adequate public transportation system will reduce our dependence on the automobile. It is no use saying that there are many arguments supporting public as against private transport. The fact is that the public transportation is not there and, even with the best intentions on the government's part, we shall see only limited public transportation for some time to come.

It is unrealistic to suggest that people need not pay the gasoline tax, that they can transfer from private to public transport. First, the infrastructure underlying public transport is not in place in this country. Second, even if we could establish the necessary infrastructure it will be many years before people can switch from private to public transport. So we are left with the automobile, with all its faults. Clearly, the automobile is not used for pleasure alone; it enables many people to hold down their jobs. People drive 40 or 50 miles to work, and not just in my riding. The hon. member for Nanaimo-Cowichan-The Islands (Mr. Douglas) said that it is a fact of life in his riding that many people must travel 40 or 50 miles to and from their jobs. One could say that the hon. member's riding is an exception, as the important activities involve logging and fishing, that long distances travelled to work must be accepted and the circumstances in the riding are unusual. I suggest they are not unusual.

I represent a highly urbanized riding and people travel vast distances to work. It is not unusual for someone living in Kitchener or Guelph to work in Cambridge, or for someone living in Cambridge to commute to Kitchener or Guelph every day. People do not live next door to the factory. Jobs change, new skills are required all the time, and factories move; therefore, mobility is important. I am sure the minister will be the first to admit that worker mobility is one way of increasing the efficient allocation of workers. Do you want to make it more expensive for workers to be mobile? Does the minister want to destroy that aspect of manpower policy?

I return to something I said earlier: one part of the budget tries to patch the problems created by another part, by dismal economic policies of the government. Apparently one government program offsets the effects of another. One must ask, what is the Minister of Finance trying to accomplish with the budget? Sorry though I am for the minister who must shore-up a crumbling house, I think he could have done better than produce this particular budget.

The government had many options open to it. Did the minister feel that the government needed more revenue, that the export tax was not bringing in enough money, or that disallowing royalties paid to provinces was not enough? Clearly, he wanted to maintain a single oil price for all Canadians. After all, when you live in a country

you do not expect one part to suffer for the benefit of another. As an aside, let me comment on the minister's potshots at the province of Ontario. On the eve of a provincial election in Ontario you hear many political comments which otherwise would not arise. The minister suggested that Ontario was being terribly selfish in opposing the oil provinces' claims to higher revenues. What he forgot to mention was that the province of Ontario, despite all its faults, supported the national oil policy for 11 years and paid more than it needed to for western oil and gas because it wanted to stimulate the development of the western energy industry.

Ontario could have bought oil cheaper offshore. In 11 years the people of Ontario spent \$500 million more than they needed to, to get the western oil industry off the ground. People conveniently forget this. They figure that the demand for oil was always there, and forget that 20 years ago you couldn't give oil away. The Americans did not want our oil, neither did anyone else. Offshore oil was coming to eastern ports at cut-rate prices. But the Canadian government said, "We are going to guarantee the market for western crude to the Ottawa Valley line." Ontario agreed to abide by the national oil policy for 11 years and not once did the people of Ontario complain, not once was a nasty editorial printed saying that the people of Ontario were being milked to pay for the oil industry of the west. We were right not to complain because without the western oil industry our situation would be desperate. As it is, we were able to develop a magnificent petroleum industry—not as magnificent as the one which could have been developed under socialist governments—

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Saltsman:—but it is magnificent all the same. We must speak the truth in the House of Commons.

Mr. Lambert (Edmonton West): What has happened to the industry in Saskatchewan under a socialist government?

Mr. Saltsman: The people of Saskatchewan are doing well under the socialist government.

An hon. Member: Wait until the next election. They will soon be free.

Mr. Saltsman: That is not one's impression if one is campaigning there. Seriously, Mr. Speaker, it is right to equalize the price across the country. Few will argue against that policy. Most Canadians agree that the policy is necessary if the country is to remain united. What is in contention is how the single price policy is to be financed. What has the government done? It has chosen a most regressive way, one that is almost designed to discredit conservation and to make people most angry. There were other ways open to the government. There is another way that other countries have followed. We have done it in wartime. I refer to conserving by rationing. If that is to be the policy, ration cards could be issued or there could be some other way whereby each person would pay a minimum amount on the preferred price. I am not discounting the administrative problems. However, with all the exemptions in this bill it will be an administrative nightmare. If we say we have to exempt the farmer, the busi-