

Transportation

amounts to an 89 per cent increase in fuel prices over a three-year period. Between 55 cents and 60 cents of that fuel price increase goes to the coffers of the federal government. It is a massive rip-off on the backs of producers. When we consider what the federal government will cash in on from its energy agreement or its oil pricing agreement signed with the western provinces—something in the order of \$51 billion—the subsidies to meet the Crow deficit are pretty small and pale by comparison. The fact of the matter is that Canadian farmers are hurting with high interest and depressed commodity prices. The budget provided no relief, there are bankruptcies, dreams are being shattered, young people are losing confidence, a lifetime of investment in long hours and hard work is vanishing. In short, there is hopelessness and despair in the farming community.

We in this party want to know, and producers must know, what the minister had in mind when he asked Professor Gilson to consider the application of variable freight rates. We should like to know how the government sees the subsidy being distributed. We should like to know what the minister would like to see in terms of how the \$600 million should be distributed; obviously he has some ideas. We should like to know what the minister had in mind when he referred to guarantee mechanisms to ensure adequate performance and capacity. Will it be only through legislation? Will it be through penalties or a performance bonus? What about investment guarantees? The House and producers of Canada need assurances that the investment provided through the funding of the federal government goes into beefing up the railway system rather than shopping centres, oil companies and hotels. With due respect, I do not think the minister dealt seriously with this issue; he was far too casual. Also we should like to know what mechanisms the minister has in mind to remove existing freight rate anomalies and to provide some semblance of parity between processed and unprocessed products. Also we should like to know what the government has in mind. We should like some enlightenment when the minister talks about economic diversification. How will it help western Canadian farmers? There is much at stake, much too much to be left solely to the task of the negotiator.

The policy enunciated was extremely vague in many areas; it is open to different interpretations. Someone suggested that it was a policy slathered in grease. Parliament should not be a bystander in the process; Parliament and its membership should be active participants. There should be no question about the fact that producers must be involved. It is an issue that is far greater than a simple freight rate adjustment. It strikes at the very fabric of the social and economic lifestyle of western Canada.

I remind the House that the west is in a rebellious mood; there is a feeling of volatility out there. Sometimes the volatility in the House reflects the mood in western Canada. The move to dismantle Crowsnest Pass freight rates is perceived to be yet another attack upon western Canada and a further escalation of the climate of confrontation we have witnessed of the government which generated intense mistrust and suspicion. There is a difference in the mood out there today compared with the mood when my party formed the Government

of Canada. At that time there was a mood of co-operation, a feeling of harmony and a feeling that we could do things together. There was a feeling of confidence and stability; promises and commitments were being kept and acted upon. We all know the mess in grain transportation when our party took over government. We had just come through a year when there was a loss of \$1 billion worth of grain sales because of breakdowns in the transportation system. We sought and obtained the co-operation of all parties, including the provincial governments of western Canada. We appointed a railway co-ordinator. We worked together with the railways. We promised action on Prince Rupert, and action was taken. We promised action on preserving branch lines, and branch lines were preserved. There was a positive mood, not a negative one. Now the mood is really desperation.

I should like to turn to the question of mandate. Does the Liberal government have a mandate to abandon the Crowsnest Pass freight rates? Of course it does not. The Liberal government not only failed to live up to its promises to provide such things as cheap energy, energy self-sufficiency, low interest rates, a well-managed economy, jobs, adequate housing and a healthy agricultural climate, but it failed to tell Canadians what it intended to do. For example, it did not tell Canadians during the election campaign that it would embark upon a policy of confrontation which is literally tearing the country apart. It did not tell Canadians that it would spend the first 18 months of its term of office talking about a new Constitution and discarding the problems of the economy. It did not tell Canadians that it would bring in a devastating National Energy Program which is seeing men, equipment, capital and expertise flowing south of the border. It did not tell Canadians that it would tax them to the hilt, directly and indirectly, and literally double the price of energy. It did not tell Canadians that it would dismantle DREE or destroy the private sector. It did not tell Canadians that it would dismantle 20 per cent of the VIA Rail passenger route structure or that it would abandon Crowsnest Pass freight rates. I ask hon. members of the House whether the Liberal Party would have obtained its mandate from the Canadian people if it had told the truth? No, never!

Many of these crucial policies affect western Canada where there are no elected Liberal members west of the city of Winnipeg. Does one still wonder why there is alienation out there, mistrust or suspicion? Alienation and political reaction are ticking away like time bombs.

What is Liberal policy? The Liberal policy on the Crow, as indicated in its policy manual in 1980, was that it was committed to preserving statutory freight rates. As late as July 4 to July 6, 1980, at the Liberal Party convention, it was stated that the Liberal Party reaffirmed its determination to preserve statutory freight rates. The minister in this House acknowledged and agreed that the statutory rate must remain. There is a significant passage in *Hansard* for May 2, 1980 at page 693. I had the floor at that time and said: