

The Budget—Mr. Deniger

example, between provincial ownership of resources on the one hand and federal paramountcy in interprovincial and international trade on the other.

It is perhaps sad that it is divergent visions of federalism which provide the foundation, if you like, upon which our current disputes are based. In the final analysis, there is no right or wrong vision of Canada. There is no set of absolute criteria with which we can say, "No, Alberta, you are wrong in believing what you believe, or in feeling what you feel, that, in the words of your premier, 'What we are facing here is a situation where more and more decision-making, more and more control, will be in the hands of decision-makers in Ottawa and your provincial government will become less and less able to influence your future.'" Personally, I do not agree with that vision of Canada, perhaps because I do not believe that a strong central government entails a priorily weak provincial counterparts. I cannot say that vision is wrong, but I can say I do not think it is the vision best suited to our current economic and political situation, both domestically and internationally.

I suppose for me the key words in this debate over powers, for that is what the budget debate is fundamentally all about, are balance and equity. Resource taxes, to cite one case in point, are merely one of the tools our national government is utilizing in its attempt to restore balance and equity to our political system, to correct the fiscal imbalance currently in effect between our central government and our provinces, simultaneously enabling Ottawa to carry out its responsibilities in redistributing Canada's wealth equitably among all Canadians.

Do not get me wrong. I am not accusing Albertans of being greedy and selfish. As their premier has pointed out, they have paid their price in confederation, whether it be through tariffs, freight rates, or equalization payments. This is as it should be, and, more important, as Alberta wishes it to be. But we must ask ourselves the following question: Does Alberta wish for a Canada which confers upon the remaining "have-nots" that very position of inferiority Albertans themselves found so humiliating and so inequitable? I personally do not think the west wants such a Canada. Yet this is precisely where its utilitarian ethics lead it, consciously or not.

It is one thing to feel, deep in your heart, that you, or your province working through you, are the best guardian of your own, very specific, very regionally unique interests. But it is quite another thing to assume that this pursuit of ones own interests somehow results in the greatest good for the greatest number or, in practical terms, results in what is best for Canada as a whole.

● (1600)

[Translation]

Mr. Speaker, during a public affairs program last weekend, the interviewer tried two or three times to bring his guest, the President of the National Bank, to say that the budget did nothing for Quebec. Mr. Bélanger then explained very careful-

ly to the interviewer that a budget must be analysed as a whole and that, in his opinion, we were all treated equally. However, in view of the insistence of this interviewer, Mr. Speaker, I feel that I should make a few comments about the impact of the Canadian energy program on Quebec.

Under the national energy program developed by our government, consumer oil prices will be much lower than those set by the previous government which involved a relationship between domestic and international prices. Because of our program, Mr. Speaker, Quebec, like other areas in the country, will pay much less for its oil since our policy is aimed at minimizing the unfavourable impact of price increases on the economic growth of these areas and reducing at the same time inflationary pressures. As for the price of gas, Mr. Speaker, the yearly increase of 45 cents per thousand cubic feet over a period of three years will cause a slower increase for consumer gas prices than for heating oil prices. Under this program, our government also wants to take new energy initiatives in Quebec by stimulating certain areas, including research. These initiatives will cost \$1.8 million in the next four years, which is about \$280 per capita.

In short, Mr. Speaker, if we look forward to 1984, we can see that, because of our program, the annual costs for the average family in Quebec will be clearly lower than what they would have been if the price of Canadian oil were related to world prices. Through its policy of establishing a better balance between the provinces, our government also intends to encourage Canadians to switch from oil to other energy sources wherever possible. In this optic, grants will be given to replace heating oil systems by systems using natural gas, electricity, solar energy and other more natural fuels in some areas. Assistance of up to 50 per cent of transformation costs up to a maximum of \$800 will be given to any individual who wants to take advantage of our program. The national energy program therefore aims at following the trend already started in Quebec where 82 per cent of all new housing built uses electricity instead of oil for heating.

At the same time, Mr. Speaker, our program enables us to assist the taxpayer to improve his residence or its insulation. Logically, if our program replaces oil by other energy sources, it is necessary to provide for Quebec an effective supply of natural gas. This is why some proper and direct steps have been taken to ensure that the construction of a gas line is undertaken as soon as possible. In concluding, Mr. Speaker, I would like to remind members that the national energy program advocated by our Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources fully respects the principle of equity and balance among the provinces. All recognize that our government should increase its revenues.

A corporate income tax on gas and petroleum has been levied rather than resorting to the deindexation of personal income tax. Instead of an excise tax between 18 to 25 cents a gallon on gas in addition to a 14-cent increase, the government