

*The Budget—Mr. Nielsen*

Tom Gould, a commentator noted for sincerity and honesty, said this morning that the minister had avoided antagonizing the oil companies and avoided a head-on confrontation with Alberta and at the same time had added billions to federal revenues while asserting the federal government's intention to get into the marketplace, or words to that effect. Presumably the minister would agree with that favourable analysis, but let us have a look at the cost. He has staked out a claim to 24 per cent of national oil revenues, a claim to which it is extremely doubtful that the federal government has any clear entitlement. It is a claim which will be disputed by the provinces by every means at their command, further worsening relations between the federal government and all levels of government. The fact that these huge revenues are being sought, not in pursuance of a policy of economizing and cutting out waste, renders the situation even more subject to criticism.

There is no sign in this budget that the government intends to follow a policy of sensible and stable reduction of costs. Quite the contrary, every indication is to the contrary. Expenditures are up, not down. Programs are increased, not being cut back. We hear the empty words of the Minister of Finance saying he will embark on no new programs, yet that is precisely what he is doing. Hon. members opposite are even talking about more Crown agencies to move into oil field to compete with private industry to try to wrest control of resources from the provinces by this device. Why does this government proliferate Crown corporations in the manner that the walnut tree grows new walnuts? One reason is simply that the expenditures of Crown corporations are not subject to the same direct scrutiny which affects government departments. That is another thing we lost here. We have lost the ability to scrutinize any of these expenditures in a meaningful way. Through the device of spawning Crown corporations the Liberal party has removed from parliamentary control or scrutiny vast areas of activity in a number of vital domains including petroleum, transportation, and others.

In each case we have witnessed the burgeoning of fiefdoms of Liberal patronage growing and swelling at the taxpayers' expense, and now this budget proposes another such entity to conceal from the gaze of the Canadian taxpayer—if he is still breathing when that time comes—the application of Liberal policies in the field of petroleum.

On top of all this we must advert to the manipulation engaged in by the minister prior to the release of his budget when, for a period of ten days, he let fall little tidbits from his table about the way he was going to crack down on registered pension plans, the way he was going to raise individual income taxes, and so forth. He was deliberately manipulating the slavish media to create a climate of despair so that, when this make-shift budget finally appeared, it would grow and sparkle by comparison with the advance warnings. If it was a plot, it succeeded admirably as the media fell in line with the carefully calculated leaks administered by Liberal party flacks—

● (1700)

**An hon. Member:** Sucked in.

**Mr. Nielsen:** Yes, sucked in, in spades.

Perhaps it is this kind of unprincipled manipulation by a minister who is a past master at the game which represents the most sordid aspect of the whole sleazy, deceitful performance.

As Canadians pay an additional 18 cents a gallon for gasoline in the new year, with more and steeper rises to come, and as householders find their fuel costs doubling through the winter months, Mr. Speaker, I hope they will pause and reflect on the duplicity of a political party which won an election on the promise made over and over again that they would not do precisely what they have now done in this budget. As hundreds of small businesses in the trucking industry and in transportation of all kinds, as well as those which depend on transportation, find themselves with their backs to the wall—because there are no compensating factors in this budget—they too may reflect on the morality of a party which has broken its solemn engagements, solemn commitments.

Our budget raised fuel prices as a modest and realistic way of coping with the problem. Anyone is free to examine our proposals and compare them with the Draconian measures brought down last night.

**An hon. Member:** Read the *Toronto Star*.

**Mr. Nielsen:** The *Toronto Star*? That bastion of impartial, unbiased journalism, compared them last night.

**An hon. Member:** How about *The Toronto Sun*?

**Mr. Nielsen:** I invite hon. members opposite to do the comparing for themselves. I do not have the time in my remarks.

**An hon. Member:** Ask Blakeney or Turner.

**Mr. Nielsen:** See your Prime Minister about the statement he made on January 21, 1980, and compare.

Our budget provided compensatory provisions. We tempered the wind, quite literally, for householders and small businesses. The minister has kept the negative aspects and thrown out the positive approach which we recommended and which alone made the others feasible and palatable.

It is, of course, traditional for the Liberal party, to decry what an opposing party does and then to adopt it holus-bolus—the NDP is familiar with that kind of conduct, they have been living with it for years—but with no understanding of the philosophy behind the recommendations.

Our budget presented balanced and reasonable proposals. The budget before us now presents many of the same proposals but without the other proposals required to compensate and counterbalance the measures which we suggested. In other words, it is a picture of fiscal imbalance and fiscal bias being perpetrated for political advantage. This is what Canadians are being asked to accept and, like the constitutional proposals, it shows the true face of Liberalism.

In the constitutional proposals they placed the provinces in a strait-jacket. With the budget they have placed small business