

would have been more careful about what he presented as facts.

He said that he is tired of mythology and wants to get down to the real facts. Yet he was prepared to say in this House that the burden of unemployment insurance premiums was being hidden by this government, and he charged that this was an act of deception. What he failed to mention, however, was that the measure was introduced by his government in the December 13 budget—that the Crosbie budget introduced the principle that a greater share of the unemployment insurance program should be carried through the premium base. That budget recommended that the premium be increased to \$1.60. When this government took office last winter, the premiums were frozen at \$1.35 as it was felt it would have been awkward to continue with the plan of the previous government. Contributors were given a full year's respite.

It is a little unfair for the hon. member to suggest that the proposal to increase the unemployment insurance premium is an act of this government when, in fact, it was supported by members of his own caucus at the time the legislation was introduced. It was supported with a great deal of enthusiasm on the quite legitimate grounds that, over a period of time, the burden of the unemployment insurance fund had to be carried more equitably. The percentage of funds carried by the public sector had risen to 40 per cent, instead of the 20 per cent formula that the public sector had normally carried. We agreed the public sector was carrying a great burden. The hon. member forgot to mention, however, that his government introduced the measure and his caucus supported it.

While dealing with misstatements and errors or sins of omission, I think the hon. member would be the first to admit his own serious sin of omission. When dealing with oil pricing, he suggested that the formula we put forward included a Syncrude levy which would take it to above \$4, and that the Tories would never have done that. We know that is not true, Mr. Speaker, because the Syncrude levy is a statutory requirement that every government would have to impose. Thus the Crosbie \$4 increase would have become \$4.75. In fairness, the former president of the treasury board should have acknowledged that.

If this debate is to be conducted with fairness, it would have been in the interest of honest observation and reporting for the hon. member to have been more accurate in the statements he made.

That brings me to the need for a more accurate and honest appraisal of the budget. Opposition spokesmen have raised cries of alarm up and down this country in the last week or so about the dastardly effect the budget will have on western Canada. Just this past weekend in my home city of Winnipeg, the hon. Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Clark) suggested that this budget rang the death bell of federalism—that the Liberals will bring about separatism. Of course, he was prepared to say that he did not believe in separatism, but still most of his speech dealt with it. He implied that the budget discriminated against western Canadians.

The Budget—Mr. Axworthy

The Premier of Alberta has suggested the budget discriminates against his province, that the government is moving into his living room to take over his furniture and all his services and resources.

The hon. member for Vancouver Centre (Miss Carney) suggested that we would be embarked upon the slippery slopes of separatism if we follow the "made in Ottawa", central Canadian type of policy. Mr. Speaker, I am a western Canadian, and I do not think I take a backseat to anyone in this House when it comes to concern for my region and the type of development that should occur there. I take strong exception, however, to the fear tactics being parlayed by certain opposition spokesmen who suggest that there is a dichotomy—that the national government is not national at all but represents "them" and not "us". In a subtle manner they try to create a division in this country. They are employing the tactics of division for whatever cynical, political reasons they may have. I know what the reasons are, Mr. Speaker.

As Minister of Employment and Immigration I will have to offer my services to the Leader of the Opposition within a few months. As an equal opportunity employer, the government is quite prepared to make sure that all the facilities of counselling and job placement are available to him when he needs them.

The tactics being employed by the opposition are very dangerous. They are playing with fire. They are taking the honest concerns and grievances that are felt in my region of the country, and in others, and fanning the flames into a conflagration, and then suggesting that there is a sweep of separatism emerging in the west when, in fact, the only separatism is in the minds of those who talk about it.

● (1600)

Sure, there are differences of opinion and there are honest criticisms about what we have done, but we are prepared to argue those criticisms and differences. However, we should not fall into the trap of this kind of fear-mongering which is simply trying to exploit those concerns and anxieties and turn them into something sour and distorted. That is mythology which is being parlayed in Canada at the present time is setting up a false distinction and a false dichotomy, trying to create divisions in Canada by employing the most exaggerated hyperbolic misstatements of facts that have ever been expressed in the history of this Parliament. We had some good examples in question period. We heard some absurd outlandish extrapolation of figures and ideas, which simply boggle the imagination until you know the people who expressed them, and then you understand why.

I am going to make a case this afternoon that the budget put forward last Tuesday by the Minister of Finance (Mr. MacEachen) does far more for western Canada, is far more in its best interests, than anything that was put forward by the previous government—those great paragons and defenders of the west. No matter how members on the other side try to cut it or try to divide it, when you compare those two documents, as members on the other side are fond of doing, and add up the