

announcements which are strictly the property of the Canadian Wheat Board. I take very grave exception to that.

● (1600)

The minister who spoke today did so at length about some of the proposals for small business. I agree that the Small Business Development Bond was a very good mechanism. But because of the uncertainty, the lack of knowledge as to what the long term would be, it had a very negative effect upon many enterprises which wanted to utilize the mechanism of the Small Business Development Bond. This government, if it really intended to provide some stability and some help to small business, should have announced its intention to carry on with the program for a year when it assumed office. But it went until the end of the year and then, of course, the people who had to plan their building programs were faced with that uncertainty as to whether it would continue. As a result, full advantage was not taken of that very good program.

As I said, this bill basically incorporates some of the major economic thrusts and philosophies of the government, but it is mostly fine tuning; there is nothing distinctive or unique about it. The other day when the minister was introducing this bill he said that there had been a lot of encouraging developments since he had brought in his budget. I am not sure where those encouraging developments are. There are certainly none in the oil industry. The headline in *Alberta Business* of January 16, 1981, reads "Industry Follows Rigs South". There certainly haven't been any encouraging developments in the automobile industry. There have been no encouraging signs in the agricultural industry, or in the housing and construction industry. The whole mess we are in is a result of the lack of leadership and the lack of the enunciation of a clear economic policy.

Let us deal with the double tracking. I have said it was a lunatic proposal. It was then, and it is now. What is happening, Mr. Speaker, is that we now have a situation where the railways are threatening to ration the availability of boxcars and hopper cars for the movement of grain. We have the Minister of Transport (Mr. Pepin) peddling the same garbage. My goodness, if we are to continue to develop and improve our reputation as a reliable supplier of grain to our customers abroad, we will certainly not be able to do it that way. The minister should denounce that statement. He should not associate himself with it at all. If he does, I am sure our customers in Japan and China will not look to Canada as a No. 1 potential supplier of product. They will say, "Well, they have got strikes, they have snow, and they have a bad transportation system. And now they are going to ration the availability of boxcars and hopper cars. Well, we cannot go there, unless we do so as a last resort." I suggest that will have a tremendously negative impact upon our future in developing markets and maintaining our markets abroad. I hope that matter will be dealt with.

I hope the minister will change his approach and tell the railroads, "I know the problem is with the matter of the statutory freight rates. Let's get on with the job." There is a consensus developing. There is much work which has to be

done, but we must maintain the momentum. If we are to call upon our farmers to produce the amount of grain that we want to market abroad, then it certainly does not provide much confidence for them if we are not able to move the product. They are sick and tired of building granaries and storage facilities.

We have a transportation system which I know will work. It requires co-operation and leadership, but it will work. There are some things which will always be a problem. But someone has to take charge. I call upon the Minister of Transport to take charge. I know that other fellow from the other place has really no interest. I must say this about the Minister of Transport, though, at least he is prepared to sit down, listen and talk to the people of western Canada. He knows he does not have all the answers. This other fellow from the other place thinks he has all the answers. As a result, he is going nowhere. I suggest to you, Mr. Speaker, and to my good friends who sit across the way who have some knowledge about western Canada, since we were on a transportation excursion both to the east and the west, that they know westerners talk straight from the hip. They will certainly sit down and talk to the Minister of Transport. I am not too sure whether sending that other yoyo out there to do the job does the party opposite and our country any good at all.

We talked about economic revitalization. Interest rates are the highest in history and yet the Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce is still here. Our dollar is the lowest it has been in 47 years. Inflation is projected at 11.7 per cent by the C. D. Howe Institute. That is the highest in 33 years. Employment prospects are bleak. Prospects for growth are at 1 per cent. Here again that is not my assessment. That is an assessment made by experts. We will have an accumulated budgetary deficit between the years 1980 and 1984 of some \$52 billion. So, you know, economic revitalization has not come to pass.

With respect to energy, the promise was that gasoline prices would increase by less than 14 cents—that was from the mouth of the Prime Minister. I do not know about areas in other parts of the country, but I can tell you that in my area the retail price of gasoline has increased by 32 cents to 34 cents a gallon since the defeat of our government. It has seen seven different increases. Diesel fuel was 61 cents at the time our government was defeated; it is now 91 cents a gallon. That is a 30-cent increase—50 per cent.

There are four new tax increases proposed under the National Energy Program. There is the petroleum gas revenue tax of 8 per cent, the natural gas excise tax of 30 cents per mcf which will increase to 75 cents. There is the petroleum compensation charge which will reach \$10.05 by 1983. Then we have a Canadian ownership charge so we can start a whole series of mini PetroCans and big PetroCans. We will have more national oil companies in this country than small businesses. That charge could be a potential \$4 per barrel. If you add all these figures together they amount to some \$37 billion worth of revenues flowing from the provinces into the federal treasury. Western Canada does not look at this as simply an encroachment. It looks upon it as a wholesale raid.