

1980 was so good that it would come along in the Throne Speech and re-endorse it. In that speech we read:

The Government will continue its strong commitment to the NEP in order to ensure that our goals are reached.

"Our goals are reached," indeed! One would never take it from this that the government has brought one of Canada's strongest natural resource industries to its financial knees, with questionable advantage—questionable advantage to the public interest, to fair prices or to Canadian ownership.

Senator Murray: Or to self-sufficiency!

Senator Roblin: Self-sufficiency, these days, is the product of the depression more than anything else, but I want to talk about ownership.

In 1980, Canadian ownership of this industry was 18.7 per cent. In 1982, it was 26.2 per cent, a substantial increase. Look at what was to happen. In 1982, the Canadian-controlled firms were in trouble. Companies making up that 26.2 per cent were wallowing in debt, losing money, paying huge interest charges and dipping into retained earnings to pay dividends. Honourable senators have only to take a look at the stock exchange if they want any validation of that fact. Canadian-controlled companies lost \$54 million in 1982 as compared to a profit of \$1.2 billion in 1981. Canadian companies involved in the acquisition of foreign firms lost more than \$600 million in 1982 after registering a profit of \$500 million in 1981. Those are not figures that I have composed myself, honourable senators, but are figures that are presented to us by the Petroleum Monitoring Agency. I think that members of the government will be aware of what that government body has to do. That is what their own monitoring agency tells us about what has happened in the oil industry.

Today the city of Calgary is an economic basket case and the province of Alberta is probably in the worst economic condition of any of the provinces of this country. Let me say this for the record: We see the government slowly backing away from the worst features of its national energy policy, compelled to do so, as it has been, not by good judgment but by the international oil price situation in the world today. But the damage has been done. So much for the big help to the Canadian oil industry. What about fair prices to the consumer? Well, the 18 cent excise tax was not put on, that's true; but in none of the documents that the government has paraded, in none of the statements that the government has requested His Excellency the Governor General to make, either in the Prorogation Speech or the Throne Speech, is there mention of any of the taxes they have introduced. They have invented new ones that we had not heard of before. The government should take some pride in originality. There are new taxes, other taxes, which are twice, three times, four times the 18 cents, of which figure the government is so proud and which was mentioned in the Throne Speech.

● (1640)

What about this "made in Canada" price that was promised to the people of Canada, to protect them from the ravages of whatever, by the grace, virtue and wise management of this

[Senator Roblin.]

administration? What about that "made in Canada" price on gasoline? Oh yes, the price at the wellhead is down, but that is not the price that the car owner pays—not by a long chalk. Pump prices—that is, what the public pay—tell another story. In December 1983, this very month, regular unleaded gasoline, calculated in Canadian gallons and in Canadian dollars, in the city of Winnipeg, from where I come, posted a price of \$2.20 per gallon. If I took the trouble to motor a little way south into the United States, to the city of Minneapolis, that same gallon, measured in the Canadian style, priced in Canadian dollars, was \$1.74, a difference of 54 cents per gallon cheaper in the United States. What price the "made in Canada" gasoline policy? If one is from Toronto, like my honourable friend, Senator Bosa, the price of gasoline there, on the fifth of this month, for self-service, regular unleaded, measured in Canadian gallons and paid for in Canadian dollars, was \$2.15. If one decided to take a little run over to Buffalo, one could buy the same product, the same quantity, with the same currency, for \$1.79, 36 cents cheaper.

Senator Bosa: There is an ad valorem tax.

Senator Roblin: Nevertheless, those are the prices that are being paid. And the impression the government wants to leave with everyone who buys gasoline is that they have saved them from a terrific increase in prices. There is an ad valorem tax also in the United States, as the honourable senator knows perfectly well. So it goes. But I shall not delay the house much longer, although further examples could be examined.

However, if honourable senators want to understand what is contained in the 1983 Throne Speech and how much they can count on it, they had better measure the government's performance since 1980; and that performance and that record is eloquent, and it inspires little confidence in the present administration. On the basis of experience, the promises that are in the 1983 Throne Speech will be recognized for what they are, namely, election fodder. They strain the credibility of the government, and they certainly strain the credulity of the Canadian public.

However, I would not have honourable senators think that things do not change in this nation. They do. I have been encouraged to find there are new voices of protest against the present administration, voices that were formerly submerged and not able to make their views known—or so they seem to think. Those are voices of men who should know, and they should know because they are ex-cabinet ministers in this administration. So far we have heard from four of them.

An Hon. Senator: What do they say?

Senator Roblin: Well, I will tell you what they say. Senator Perrault has already spoken, and, as he is a member of this house, if he wishes to repeat what he said elsewhere, we will give him the opportunity and the privilege of doing so. I was particularly taken, or perhaps I should say shocked, by the statement of the Honourable James Fleming who was a cabinet minister in this administration. He describes the policy and practice of the present government as a combination of cynicism, ballyhoo and manipulation. Well now, as the Honourable