

going to do all those things he suggested with money he would save from Petro-Can over a number of years.

Mr. Stevens: Are you putting the money in, or are you not?

Mr. Jamieson: The hon. member will understand that when he gets the information at the appropriate time.

May I return to what I was saying a few moments ago about where you are going to cut? This is a difficult question. How are we to cope with some of the serious problems confronting us? The Conservative opposition shows a shocking ambivalence in its approach to budget cutting. You know, they have to give lip service to the idea that somehow or other unemployment insurance is a great rip-off. They have to do that. So they get up and talk about the UIC and say that, sure, they would like to see the three-week period extended to six weeks, and so on. After they have said that they have, in a sense, placated most of the shell-backs who denounce unemployment insurance in total.

Then, having said that, they talk about changing the UIC much more fundamentally and basically. Their proposals are far more far-reaching than any we are now talking about. Their proposals would, in my judgment, really undermine the integrity of the program, if they were accepted. Let us not forget—and I coming from the Atlantic provinces certainly cannot forget this—that the Minister of Finance has not cut the benefits under unemployment insurance. He has repeatedly told us this. I, for one, say that it is good for him that he has not cut benefits, although he has been repeatedly urged to do so.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Jamieson: It is true, as I concede along with hon. members opposite who have said so, that there are a number of abuses connected with the program. But let us not be fooled. The vast majority of Canadians drawing unemployment insurance draw it because they need it very badly. So I say that the Minister of Finance took what I consider as the least painful of the various options open to him.

There was a time a few years ago when we might not have been as concerned or as pleased—depending on which side of the fence you happen to be on—about the basic changes in the unemployment insurance program. I notice that the minister, I beg your pardon, I mean the hon. member for York-Simcoe—God forbid he should ever be a minister—rationalized beautifully this afternoon. If anybody ever used statistics as a yo-yo, it was the hon. member for York-Simcoe this afternoon. His performance was remarkable. He talked about a \$3.75 billion UIC payout, and about how the payments had gone up incredibly as between one year and the next. Of course they did. How come it has taken him so long to discover that we improved substantially the unemployment insurance program several years ago and, as a result, that hundreds of thousands of Canadians who were out of the work force in those intervening years have had available substantially greater benefits than ever before? So, one should not say that these payments involve a shocking increase in government expenditures. The program was deliberately improved, with the support and backing of hon. members

The Budget—Mr. Jamieson

opposite, many of whom wished to go even further than we went. I concede that some hon. members who are present this afternoon were not members of the House at that time. The records of the House will bear out my statement.

By the way, let me deal with the hon. member's juggling of figures. The hon. member denounced the government in a shocking way by saying that tax revenues had gone up by 41 per cent. The hon. member suggested this is terrible. I ask my hon. friend, what does this mean? By and large it means that the people of Canada were making significantly higher incomes in the years about which he is talking. That is the real accomplishment.

Mr. Stevens: Taxes are up by over 40 per cent in two years.

Mr. Jamieson: The hon. gentleman had his innings today; now he must sit on the back bench and catch some of the foul balls he sent this way.

I only have a few minutes left, which I am sure hon. members regret deeply. Let me say a word about the energy situation, because the situation has been misrepresented, both intentionally and unintentionally. The fact is that one must start with this basic question: what would the situation be today if the federal government had not intervened to establish the one-price system across the country? That is the point from which you start. If we had not done that, Mr. Speaker, we should have seen world prices charged in this country, or prices in one part would have been significantly different from prices in another part of the country. We would have had a situation which every member of this House conceded a year and a half or so ago would have been thoroughly undesirable and divisive for this country. Therefore, the Minister of Finance, and those associated with him, deserve a tremendous amount of credit for the manner in which they handled the whole question of the one-price system.

● (1750)

We are into this situation today because the circumstances of a year and a half ago have changed. The Minister of Finance made it perfectly clear that our exports to the United States, principally, have declined to the point where the tax which he was to bring in to maintain equalization is being reduced. Incidentally, it is ironic, but we are in this situation where, despite the criticisms and complaints of a few months ago—and they came from many members opposite, particularly those from the west—about our reduction in the quotas of energy flowing to the United States, that country today is not even taking the amount of the quotas that we established. In any event, that is only an aside.

The fact is that with the reduction in those, plus the increase in the amount being imported into Canada, the people of Canada were faced with a situation where we either had to let natural forces take their course or we had to maintain the one-price system. If we were to have adopted the first alternative, the prices in eastern Canada, not only for gasoline but for home heating oil, industrial oil and every other consumer product, would have been substantially higher than they are going to be as a result of the measures brought in in this budget.