

Excise Tax Act

this excise tax will not have a significant conservation effect in Skeena. Are all hon. members ready to accept the fact that the people there are paying \$1.03.9 cents per gallon for regular gasoline? That is what I paid last week in Dease Lake, which is in my constituency, and when you pay that price you are fully aware of the need not to waste gas.

I mentioned earlier that the prices of confederation must be high, and that there is a need to share equally the costs as well as the benefits of building our great country. In Skeena we accept that principle, and we do not object to sharing the costs of the oil subsidy program or any of the other elements of national unity which are essential to Canada's future.

It seems to me that too many hon. members from all sides of the House, who sit here complacently and smugly representing their "comfortable cat" urban ridings and then complain about something like this excise tax, have forgotten that there are still parts of Canada which do not have the facilities and services they take for granted. Some of these hon. members seem to forget that the mines that produce the metals that feed the automobile plants do not operate themselves, that the trees in the wilderness forests do not chop themselves down, that the fish do not jump out of the ocean into nice, neat little cans, ready for the grocery store in Scarborough.

It takes people to do these things, Mr. Speaker—Canadians. And these Canadians from not only my own riding of Skeena but from other ridings in our north and mid-north all across Canada do their jobs and live their lives without the social, recreational, cultural or medical amenities considered necessities by our country's comfortable southern urban population.

This last Tuesday was a very important day in my home town of Price Rupert. A ceremony was held to mark the opening of a new dental clinic. And why was this such an eventful day? Because this city of 20,000 people now has a grand total of three, instead of two, dentists, and each dentist has only 7,000 people to look after instead of 10,000.

As I have said, my constituents accept the necessity of this excise tax as one of the costs of keeping our country together. But they are also beginning to wonder when they can expect some consideration regarding costs themselves. Those in the mid-north would like a little more regional assistance.

Expensive gasoline is not something new to us. I recall that there was a royal commission on gas prices in British Columbia in 1964, and the average price of regular gasoline in Vancouver was then 39.9 cents per gallon. In Prince Rupert it was 49.4 cents per gallon. Today the average price of regular gasoline in Vancouver is 71.9 cents per gallon. In Prince Rupert it is 84.9 cents; in Terrace and in the Bulkley Valley 86.9; and, as I have mentioned, in Dease Lake I paid \$1.03.9 per gallon for regular gasoline.

What my constituents would like to know, Mr. Speaker, is why it is so much more expensive for gasoline in our part of the country. When you take away the new ten cents excise tax, the 3.2 cents in other federal excise taxes, and the 17 cents in provincial road taxes on a gallon of regular gasoline, the price in Vancouver is 41.7 cents per gallon, and in Burns Lake 56.7 cents, or 36 per cent higher.

[Mrs. Campagnolo.]

And that money is not staying in Burns Lake; it is going to Vancouver, or Calgary, or Houston, Texas.

My constituents do not object to paying ten cents per gallon to ensure a reasonable gasoline price for those Canadians dependent on imported oil. But we are a little less enthusiastic about subsidizing multinational oil companies who swear by their belief in competition so long as it does not interfere with their ability to charge whatever the traffic will bear.

In 1963 the previous government of the province of British Columbia authorized a royal commission on the gasoline price structure in B.C. as is the case with most such studies under that administration, it was essentially a manoeuvre to cool off a too hot political issue, and little consideration was paid to its recommendations. But this report contains some very interesting information, such as the conclusion by the commissioner, Mr. Justice William Morrow, that "the present high retail mark-up in some areas is unfair", and his statement that "the figures do show that there are a number of centres in B.C., such as Prince Rupert... where the average gasoline sales per station are not very much below those in metropolitan Vancouver. This is an important fact, inasmuch as the major oil companies have mentioned that one of the reasons for the high dealer mark-up in outlying centres is the relatively low gallonage going through the service stations in those areas, as compared with the lower mainland."

The commissioner further reported that, according to the oil companies' own figures, of the 9.4 cents per gallon mark up on regular gas between Vancouver and Prince Rupert in 1964, only 2.58 cents per gallon could be attributed to transportation costs. There were 6.82 cents of fat in there in 1964, and there is a lot of fat in there somewhere today, Mr. Speaker, and it's certainly not going to my constituents in Skeena. I only hope that hon. members opposite will pull their heads out of the sand for long enough in the near future so that we just might be able to pass phase one of the competition act and allow the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs (Mr. Ouellet) to examine closely situations such as this.

● (2100)

What does this have to do with excise taxes? A great deal, as hon. members from the comfortable south will see. In researching this subject for my speech today I talked for a considerable time with a resident of my constituency, Mr. Cyril Shelford, who was a cabinet minister in the previous Social Credit government of the province of British Columbia, a man who has for many years pursued the inequities of the gasoline prices we in the north must pay; a man, too, who was investigated twice for being a communist simply for saying what I am saying now. He is a Social Creditor, and as the hon. member for Prince George-Peace River (Mr. Oberle) will tell you, Mr. Speaker, a Social Creditor is just a little bit further right than he is.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

An hon. Member: The chief ostrich has just walked in.

Mrs. Campagnolo: I received considerable information on the subject from this constituent as well as from many