

Energy Supplies Emergency Act

ment, criticized it from time to time. I think that his article was worth being read in this House.

Therefore, having decided to maintain the oil price freeze throughout Canada, with the exception of Quebec and the eastern provinces, as I said, in fact the central government has given this responsibility to the provinces while it is the only one to profit by the present price increase. And I go on:

By shifting this responsibility upon provincial governments, he is making fun of people, and in order to understand this fully, one must take a close look at the oil tax structure.

On the other hand, Ottawa takes full advantage of the rising market because it applies its tax in terms of a percentage of the sales price to the wholesaler, a tax which is, of course, in any case, passed on to the consumer. This means, therefore, that Ottawa should be the first to help the consumer, which, of course, does not prevent the provinces from also giving him a helping hand.

There is no doubt that this situation will be considered at length at the federal-provincial conference on energy—

According to me, this conference comes too late.

—which will bring together all the premiers in Ottawa in January, but all the same, in the meantime, nothing will be done to help the taxpaying consumer who is condemned in addition to remain helpless in the face of a further spiralling inflation brought about by this galloping increase in the prices of energy.

It must be noted also that Ottawa is the only level of government to tax heating oil which is not a luxury in Canada, needless to say.

The Minister of Health and Welfare emphatically stated that he saw to it that welfare recipients will not have to suffer hardships because of this price increase. However, the fact remains that by taking such action, he is giving them a Greek gift.

He is giving with one hand while getting twice as much in the other and in many cases, from the very people to whom he is giving a bonus.

It seems that if the New Democratic Party—

I regret that there is no member of that party in the House at the present time. I continue the quotation:

—which will support the Liberals tomorrow on the non-confidence motion, sincerely wants to help primarily the poorer Canadians, it will have to make the full weight of the balance of power felt in favour of a remission of oil charges.

It would be a beneficial measure for the consumer!

Mr. Speaker, that editorial deserves some consideration. The government is not necessarily blamed, but urged to consider the seriousness of the present crisis in Canada as well as the difficulties and worries it is causing for all Canadians. Every weekend in our constituencies, many ask us what will happen and if the government will provide the needed supplies. Therefore production is not the issue. It seems that we produce enough oil products to keep us warm this winter. It seems that the problem is one of transport and supply. The lack of long term policy is causing concern to the Canadian people, and rightly so. A world crisis also distresses the government. To be sure, our role consists in making recommendations and helpful suggestions to the government with the hope they will be taken into consideration. I believe my remarks have been very practical. I am quite willing to co-operate for a national policy set up which would be equitable throughout the country, but if this measure did not ensure equal prices for both east and west, I would not be able to support it.

[Mr. La Salle.]

I would have wished that the provinces be invited to a meeting before the bill is introduced. I doubt that the bill, if passed, will meet all the criteria and all the aspirations of the provinces. The lack of prior consultations with the provinces still leads us to believe that the government is mistaken and in spite of that we are still called to take a position on a crisis, a problem that it is urgent to settle. I trust that Quebec members will assume their responsibilities by getting from the government equal prices in the East and out West so that Quebec citizens do not pay more for their products than westerners.

Mr. Albert Béchard (Bonaventure-Îles-de-la-Madeleine): Mr. Speaker, could I put a question to the hon. member for Joliette?

Mr. La Salle: I agree, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Béchard: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member for Joliette has referred to a division, to two parts of the country, East and West. Does he remember that the Borden line was the work of a progressive conservative government of which he was once a member and to which he has sworn that he would not belong anymore? Furthermore, does he know that it was the previous progressive conservative government which divided the country in two parts? He also referred to the feed grains policy. Does he know also that this discrimination between East and West concerning feed grains was encouraged by progressive conservative governments and especially by that of the right hon. member for Prince Albert (Mr. Diefenbaker)?

● (2120)

[English]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please. I think the question regarding the so-called Borden line is a legitimate one pertaining to this debate, but it seems to me that matters regarding feed grains might be raised at another time. I recognize hon. member for Joliette (Mr. La Salle) for his response.

[Translation]

Mr. La Salle: Mr. Speaker, I have tried to state very objective opinions. Whether this policy was adopted by the Progressive Conservatives or the Liberals is hardly any concern of mine. I urge this government not to repeat the same mistakes. Whether they were made by this or that government—and I feel perfectly free to talk about this—is irrelevant. I only say to the government that if the Progressive Conservatives have made mistakes, it is not forbidden to think that so have the Liberals. That we do not always repeat the same mistakes is what matters. I only urge this government not to make mistakes, to make the necessary corrections to the bill it introduced and which does not guarantee price parity between eastern and western Canada. And if the Progressive Conservatives are responsible for such mistake, Mr. Speaker, I hope that the hon. member for Bonaventure-Îles de la Madeleine (Mr. Béchard) will see to it that the Liberal government does not make the same mistake.

Mr. Béchard: I would ask the hon. member for Joliette whether he was in the House last Thursday when the right hon. Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) made his speech