

to make difficult decisions and not blow in the wind like blue ostrich feathers, tinted and curled, and ready to fly away with every passing breeze.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mrs. Campagnolo: The June 23 budget showed leadership, leadership which will provide us with a fair and equitable energy policy in the years and decades ahead. This government is not afraid to look at the long term needs of Canadians, perhaps not even born yet, as priorities.

We know that prices for oil and gas are going to continue to rise. We know that it will take a massive commitment, and equally massive amounts of money, to bring the tar sands and the oil deposits in the high Arctic into full production.

The question then is not whether these things are going to happen, but what policies are we going to have to ensure that their impact on Canadians is as minimal, and as fair and equitable as possible.

That is why we now have a single national price for petroleum products in Canada. That is why the export charge on petroleum sold outside of the country is used to subsidize the cost of petroleum for those Canadians who are still dependent on Venezuelan and Mid-Eastern oil. That is why we accept that petroleum prices must be brought closer to international levels in order to encourage the development of our untapped resources and ensure a continued supply of Canadian oil for Canadian users.

The ostriches would have us sit with our heads in the sand until our current reserves are used up, dried and dead, and then place us at the mercy of the OPEC cartel. I do not accept the ostrich school of thought, formidable though it might be in aviary circles. Neither do my constituents.

I would tell the hon. Leader of the Opposition if he were here that we do not harbour resentment toward the eastern part of this country every time we buy gasoline because we are subsidizing those Canadians who are dependent on imported petroleum products. For, Mr. Speaker, even in far away Skeena, we are Canadians too, and we are proud of it. We have no time for short-sighted politicians who feel they must put their picayune interests ahead of the good of the country.

We do not like paying the extra ten cents a gallon when we buy our gas, but we are willing to do it because we are aware of the need for it, and are aware that it is a part of the price we must pay to keep our country growing and developing, and to ensure that the people of this nation do not suffer severe financial hardship just because they live in a certain part of the country.

Ours is a young and growing country, and the costs of its growth must be as equally divided as the benefits. Surely, Mr. Speaker, all members are aware of and accept that basic principle. That is the basis on which our country was founded.

Certainly the ten cents per gallon is unpopular and expensive, even exasperating to some, but they are the users and able to pay. I might remind hon. members that the building of the Canadian Pacific Railway was pretty expensive, and pretty unpopular as well, until Pierre

Excise Tax Act

Berton made it profitable. So were those high tariffs designed to create and protect the Ontario and Quebec manufacturing industries. They were considered necessary, despite the cost, as part of the price of the shaping of our country as we know it today.

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A responsible and constructive opposition would have accepted this basis—a basis accepted by the people of our country as part of the price of unity and confederation—and would have offered positive and realistic criticisms of the government's policies. Hopefully they would have put forward some alternate proposals. Instead, what have we seen?

The main criticisms, once you wade through all of the high and mighty verbiage and a few ostrich feathers, appear to be that the excise tax is the wrong way to collect the money, and that anyway, it is not necessary. The only need for it, in the words of the biggest ostrich in Queen's Park, is the "propensity of the Government of Canada to consume money". Well, I would like to see him explain that one to the residents of his present federal leader's riding in Halifax, who would be paying well over \$1 per gallon for gas if it had not been for the leadership of this federal government. As it is, the oil subsidy program will operate this year at a deficit of between \$400 million and \$600 million. So, simply stated, the money is needed.

Which brings me to the second criticism by the opposition—that the excise tax is a vile, iniquitous, and a generally nasty way to raise money. On the other hand, however, they agree the money should not be raised by increasing personal income taxes, and the government deficit is already too large. I do not really know what else that leaves, unless the hon. member for York-Simcoe (Mr. Stevens) has something else up his sleeve—perhaps another bank.

The excise tax is not perfect, and I have my own criticisms of it which I will come to shortly, but I believe it is the fairest means of collecting the needed revenues because it is based on the principle that those persons who buy petroleum for their own personal use should be called on to bear the financial burden of implementing an agreed upon national petroleum policy.

I accept that there are inequities in this tax, and it penalizes those who must rely on an automobile for their only means of transport. But let me point out to hon. members that in my constituency it is not a drive of 50 or 60 miles into the city, but a drive of 500 to 600 miles—1,008 miles if one wishes to visit the beautiful metropolis of Vancouver.

However, we must accept the fact that we have to change our energy consumption habits, and I would sooner have the car driving residents of my constituency pay this tax than I would have them subsidized by my constituents who do not drive automobiles, and by the senior citizens who practise conservation not through choice but through economic necessity. As I indicated earlier, however, I do feel that this tax is, in areas, unfair, and that it places a special burden on the residents of my constituency as well as the residents of other more remote parts of our country.

I regret to advise the Minister of Finance and the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources (Mr. Macdonald) that