

*The Budget*

economy with the environment, to anticipate and prevent instead of reacting and curing, and to deliver social programs where sustainable development requires it. Surely, we have the skills. Surely, there are models, in Sweden, the Netherlands, in Norway.

At home, Canadian proposals are emerging all over the place, including the tax on environmental nuisance, proposed by the Quebec Union for the Conservation of Nature, *le Groupe de recherche appliquée en macro-écologie*. It would be a tax on carbon emissions which could eliminate the need for the goods and services tax, and at the same time help reduce carbon dioxide pollution which leads to global warming.

In his first budget in the 1990s, the Minister of Finance fails to put on notice polluters and fails to encourage those who do not wish to pollute. What is he waiting for? What is preventing him from applying green ideas to Canada's tax system? Why is the Minister of Finance not exempting from the goods and services tax products approved as environmentally friendly by the Environmental Choice Program? Why is he not shifting, instead of slashing, funds for the advancement of renewable sources of energy? Why is he not strengthening Canada's research capability in environmental technology? Why is he not accelerating tax write-offs for investments made by business in industrial processes which would reduce pollution? Why is he not developing incentives for the reduction of waste to help municipalities in their Herculean efforts?

The fact that no actions are being taken tells us that the government has understood only that there is a vote-getting opportunity in the environment. It has stopped there. It has not recognized that glowing rhetoric on the environment must be supported by concrete actions. Thus, it allows itself, and quite rightly so, to be accused of political opportunism. A good example is the budget speech.

On the one hand, the Minister of Finance says: "Canadians want action to protect our environment", and then the so-called environmental action plan which was to be announced at the same time as the budget as an economic as well as an environmental statement is postponed. We learned also that the plan will be fiscally responsible. That is an ominous signal that the Minister

of Finance intends to handcuff the Minister of the Environment.

• (1630)

Evidently this government does not understand what sustainable development means. The environment and the economy are seen as separate and competing forces. The government pays lip service to sustainable development but does not want to make tough decisions. Clearly sustainable development ranks very low in this government's priorities.

It is not by accident that the environment department receives less than one cent of every federal dollar spent. It is not by accident that the Winnipeg Centre for Sustainable Development, promised in September, 1988, by the Prime Minister at the United Nations, is still waiting announcement. It is not by accident that the environmental agenda was rejected by cabinet. It is not by accident that this government pays only lip service to renewable and non-fossil fuel forms of energy. It is not by accident that Petro-Canada is to be sold because the government does not recognize its value in developing alternatives to fossil fuels in the future.

This government's attitude to the environment is summed up by the Minister of Finance himself, as reported at page 8609 of *Hansard*, when he says that as long as the deficit is at the current level "We will not have the money to spend on health care, on post-secondary education, on the environment, on native affairs or on any of these policies".

He goes on to say that if he can reduce the deficit in five years only then will "we have billions of dollars more money either to cut taxes, look after maintaining and improving these programs or look after new initiatives such as the environment".

The environment should, in his opinion, wait five years. Well, a major environmental wave will sweep the Tories out of office by 1992. It will not wait five years.

This budget is silent about Canadians whose survival depends on fish. Globally we have not practised sustainable development harvesting of our fisheries. If we take the necessary but tough conservation measures now, then in a few years we will have thriving fishing communities in Atlantic Canada again. In the meantime though we must support the coastal communities by way of social programs to ensure a stable life until the resource