

Oil Substitution Act

at that time? Of course, we know that through some fit of insanity they seem to have voted for the original Bill. The Hon. Member has now said that the reason they voted for it was that it was slightly less insane than other insanities, or something like that. Could the Hon. Member indicate whether he would have been in favour of going to full world prices at that particular time, recognizing the fact that it would have probably bankrupted all the Maritime Provinces of Canada, perhaps the Province of Quebec and part of eastern Ontario? Is it the policy of the Conservative Party to bankrupt eastern Canada? Yes or no?

● (1150)

Mr. Hawkes: Mr. Speaker, the policy of the Conservative Party as it relates to Atlantic Canada is to give it a fair shake on Confederation after all these years to help it develop its own sense of industry and resourcefulness and to help it reach economic health rather than providing the subsidies which made it dependent on the centre of the country. I am proud to belong to a Party that signed an agreement with the Province of Newfoundland and will sign an agreement with the Province of Nova Scotia that will give those provinces control over the pace of development in their regions rather than telling them that people in Ottawa know best what is good for the people in Newfoundland and Nova Scotia. That is the philosophy.

Mr. Boudria: What does that have to do with what happened then?

Mr. Hawkes: The Hon. Member asked what that had to do with what happened then. The Hon. Member is new to the House of Commons. In 1979 he would have seen that when it became necessary to convert the Atlantic region from oil to other heating sources, there was to be special assistance for the entire region.

Mr. Boudria: Oh no, you said it was insane. You said that was insanity.

Mr. Hawkes: I am talking about 1979 when we formed the Government. The Hon. Member is talking about 1980 when the National Energy Program destroyed the economy of the country. In 1979 we were moving toward assistance for electrical power generation in the Atlantic region. We were going to provide help in getting off oil for renters as well as home owners. This has nothing to do with COSP and CHIP and giving little grants of money to people in return for votes. That is an entirely different mentality from the mentality of using federal public policy to assist in infrastructure development in all regions of the country.

Mr. McKnight: Somebody voted against it.

Mr. Hawkes: Ultimately people got tired of these band-aids and indicated that it was time to change the major policies of the country so we could restore it to economic health. That is what we were elected to do. Like it or lump it, that is what we are going to do.

Mr. Keeper: Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the Hon. Member about a few things. First, he made a case for market value of oil in order to encourage conservation and he indicated that he was opposed to the regulation of oil prices. Does he think that the oil prices that were determined by OPEC, an international cartel, were free market prices? Does he not understand that when regulation of oil prices was brought into the country, it was brought in as a response to the skyrocketing costs of oil, a response to prices that were rising as a result of an international cartel? Is that what he means by a free market? Perhaps the Hon. Member could explain to us what he means by a free market.

Mr. Hawkes: Mr. Speaker, I would encourage the Hon. Member to get into his car next weekend and drive across the border to a town in which the free market is in operation. While there, I would advise him to fill up his gas tank. The regulated price of gas in Canada is 75 per cent of world price, or of cartel price if the Hon. Member wants to call it that. It will cost him more to fill up his gas tank right here than it would across the border where the world price is in operation. I believe that that was the basic mistake that was made. By regulating prices, by holding them down, we indeed increased taxes at all levels and made the price higher for the consumers.

Was the Hon. Member here in 1979? I think he was. He might realize that back in those days the policy that was then forthcoming would have protected senior citizens. The 1979 Budget that his Party used to bring down the then Government was judged by the Canadian Welfare Council as being the fairest Budget to poor people in the 1970s. It was judged as being the fairest Budget to poor people in the entire decade. His Party brought down the Government on that Budget. Since that moment that Party has had no credibility when it comes to financial matters in the country.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The period for questions and comments is now over. We shall resume debate.

Mr. Don Boudria (Glengarry-Prescott-Russell): Mr. Speaker, I am extremely pleased to participate in this debate on Bill C-24. We must remember why Bill C-24 was introduced. It was introduced as part of the expenditure and program review cut-back. Of course, the program review cut-back, or the first attack on the Canadian people by "Mike the Knife", as he should more properly be called, advocated a reduction of \$95 million in one program and a reduction of \$84 million in another program. That is the real reason why the Bill is before us today.

If we were to have a free vote on this Bill, we all know that the majority of Members would support the Bill. However, when threatened by "Erik the Dreaded" and "Mike the Knife", Conservative members do not always do what they wish to do. They are sometimes forced to vote for the kind of reprehensible legislation that is before us today. There is nothing they can do about that. They must toe the line and clap at the proper time when cued to do so. You will know, Mr. Speaker, being the truly objective and non-partisan person that you are, that that is exactly what happens.