

Madam Speaker, this is what I am rising against at this time and I cannot accept that the opposition leader, in the name of the parliamentary spirit should appeal to our sense of courtesy while he himself is not going by, not respecting the Standing Orders of the House to make his point.

[English]

Mr. Bob Rae (Broadview-Greenwood): Madam Speaker, there is no question that technically under the rules the minister can do what he has done. That is not what we are challenging here; that does not seem to me to be what is at stake. But what is at stake is that for the second time in the life of this Parliament this government has introduced budgetary matter via the back door. That is precisely what we are talking about here.

On April 21 we had the Minister of Finance (Mr. MacEachen) making an economic statement of which he did not even have the courtesy to give me notice. Today we have the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources (Mr. Lalonde) informing this House that the government as of midnight tonight, July 11, will impose a tax on oil. This is not a matter of future speculation—but a matter of government fiat, of which my colleague, the hon. member for Vancouver-Kingsway (Mr. Waddell), did not have any notice whatsoever, that this government intends to amend the Petroleum Administration Act by imposing a tax on oil produced in Canada and on oil imported into Canada.

We are getting a budget by strip-tease here, Madam Speaker. We are not getting a series of economic policies; we are getting dribs and drabs thrown at the Canadian people from time to time. I think it is quite extraordinary on the part of the minister to introduce aspects of a budget. Will there be a cost of living credit to offset the effects of this increase in price? Will there be an energy tax credit, which even the member for St. John's West (Mr. Crosbie) offered? It was a paltry one, it was too late, it was insufficient, but at least it was there.

An hon. Member: You voted against it.

Mr. Rae: Will that be there? What will be the effect on inflation? What will be the effect on fairness? I say that it is quite extraordinary that in the middle of the day on a Friday—

Mr. Lalonde: What is wrong with Friday?

Mr. Rae: The minister asks what is wrong with Friday. I work on Fridays just as hard as he does.

An hon. Member: We work harder.

Mr. Rae: But I think we can take judicial notice of the fact that there are many members who live in the west of Canada. It is unfortunate that this is a problem which the minister will never have to face, but western members are not always able to be here on Fridays because of obligations in their constituencies. The minister knows that perfectly well. The point of the matter is that 12 hours prior to the imposition of a tax, we are

given, without any notice, an indication in this form. I think it is quite an extraordinary way to run the affairs of this country.

The Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) was today unable to answer questions in relation to basic, fundamental economic policies of the government because he said that he had been too busy to study what was going on and what was being produced by the OECD. The Prime Minister is too busy to know anything about the economy. Now we have a minister of energy who, 12 hours prior to the imposition of a new tax which will have a dramatic effect on relations between the provinces and the federal government and a dramatic effect on the consumers of Canada, is telling us that this is the kind of tax he plans to introduce.

There is no question, Madam Speaker, that the minister can do this. There are many things governments can do.

An hon. Member: Order.

Mr. Nowlan: What do you mean? There is no order here.

Mr. Rae: But the test of fiscal honesty and the test of governmental responsibility is not whether or not you can do it, but whether or not you ought to do it.

Mr. Clark: That is right.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Rae: Previous governments have fallen despite the size of their majorities because they abused their majority, abused the courtesies of this House and abused the basic fundamental notion that, if taxes are to be introduced into this House, those taxes have to be debated on the floor of the House of Commons prior to the time that they are introduced.

Some hon. Members: Right.

Mr. Rae: It is quite amazing to me—

Mr. Lalonde: You do not know your parliamentary rules.

An hon. Member: Tell him kings have lost their heads for that.

Mr. Rae: The minister said that I do not know my parliamentary rules. I have said to the minister that he can do this; the rules do provide for it. What I am telling the minister is that that is not the question.

Mr. Clark: It is simply reprehensible.

Mr. Rae: The question is whether or not the minister ought to do it. I know that the minister will say today, just as he said yesterday in answer to a question about the pipeline, that he is not embarrassed by any changes in the government's position. There is a simple reason why the minister is not embarrassed, and that is that this is a government that has no sense of shame.

This is a government that was prepared on April 21 to introduce a budget without telling anybody about it. This is a