

Privilege—Mr. Clark

no royalties until there is a profit on the Syncrude projects and there is no profit. I would like the minister to acknowledge that there are no royalties and no moneys being paid out of these levies to the province of Alberta.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Flora MacDonald (Kingston and the Islands): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to see in this discussion on the question of privilege that the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources (Mr. Lalonde) has at least had the courage to correct one misstatement which he made. Perhaps before this debate is through, we will have the minister carry out the procedures more properly than we have seen today, in the spirit of trying to make this House co-operate, as my leader mentioned earlier today when he entered this debate.

When my leader put forward the question of privilege this morning, it was not so that the minister would automatically come to the House and make a lengthy statement. We know that he is operating under narrow legalistic terms; nobody has been arguing that point. What we have been speaking of is the question whether or not Canadians, through their Parliament and through the people whom they choose to represent them in the democratic process to which surely we all adhere, can be legitimately informed of the way they are to be taxed. Surely that is the question which is at stake here.

Surely this is the matter which will be troubling members of Parliament as we attend in this place and a great number of Canadians to whom we in this chamber are accountable in explaining to them what it is they will be required to pay in the way of taxation. I know that there will be many people asking questions of me and others about this new form of taxation, which will probably bring in something in the vicinity of \$600 million in government revenues beginning tonight. Many people are going to be asking, "What does this mean to me personally?" What does it mean to people, particularly older people, not to mention the widowed elderly people who are single, people about whom many of us in this House have previously expressed concern? Faced with a new form of taxation, what will it mean to them in the way of additional costs for home heating fuel? That is something which I would like to be able to explain to my constituents as I go out tomorrow, next week or whenever it may be. We have not had that kind of explanation from the minister.

Obviously, it is a budgetary measure and something which should be dealt with in the way we normally tackle budgetary measures, but we have not had that chance in the House. That in itself, unfortunately, will be interpreted by many people in the country, whether it is a narrow legal interpretation by the government or not, as a failing of this House and of the members of this House to be able properly to explain the reasons for the new taxation.

What will it mean to people in one part of the country, such as the Atlantic area, who will suddenly be faced with higher costs for home heating fuel and who have no means of substitution with the oil-fired furnaces which they now have? What do you say to those people?

Mr. Corbin: Oh, oh!

Miss MacDonald: It is all very well for the hon. member from New Brunswick—what is his riding?

Mr. Corbin: Madawaska-Victoria.

Miss MacDonald: The hon. member for Madawaska-Victoria does not care about the older people and the poor people in his riding, but I want to tell him that I care.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Miss MacDonald: He may think that this does not mean anything in the way of additional costs, but I can tell him from a personal point of view—

Mr. Corbin: Tell it to Premier Hatfield.

Miss MacDonald:—that it means a great deal of difference to my mother who lives in Cape Breton.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Miss MacDonald: She does not have the chance to convert to other forms of home heating fuel. This will be an additional burden on her and on many hundreds of thousands like her throughout the country.

Mr. Corbin: You are not dealing with the fundamental question.

Miss MacDonald: The hon. member for Madawaska-Victoria does not seem to understand the fundamental question. The fundamental question is whether he is accountable and whether I am accountable to the people of this country for what we must tax them.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Miss MacDonald: That is the question. If the hon. member for Madawaska-Victoria does not understand that Parliament, in the final analysis, is accountable for the way in which it raises taxes—

Mr. Collette: Speak to the question of privilege.

Miss MacDonald:—and spends the money of the people of this country, then he has no fundamental understanding of Parliament. I would say to the hon. member that those things should be taken into consideration. It is not necessary to do so under the narrow legalistic rules which the government all too often tries to use in order to wear out the humanitarian approach which it should use in its introduction of measures. Certainly it may not be necessary, but surely it is the civilized and decent thing to do when you are living in a free democratic society in which you are accountable to the people.