

Economic Conditions

exporter of energy. We were one of the energy exporting nations. And to compare ourselves today with all the poor countries like Japan, Germany, Sweden and France is not a good comparison. These people are truly vulnerable. Here we sit, the richest country in the world. We are as rich as the Soviet Union, except that in the Soviet Union the people own all the resources, so they are a little richer than we are, at least the socialists to my left think so. The lever of their economy is managed by the government, just as this government would like ours to be. But here we are, one of the richest countries in the world, and we could be energy self-sufficient. But what do we talk about at 3.30 in the morning? Energy.

In the countries I have mentioned, the parliaments there do not talk about energy. They know they have the gun to their head. They pay the price and pass it on to the consumer—\$3, \$4, \$5 for a gallon of gasoline is what they pay in France and Britain, all over Europe. They pay the price. There is no easy solution. In Canada we seem to think there is. The Prime Minister seems to think we can fool all of the people all of the time. He brought in something which was little different than the bitter pill we proposed in our energy package in February. He disguised all his intentions. For instance, there were four types of gasoline taxes which were imposed in this package. The Prime Minister tells us it will save something in the order of \$4 billion compared to the Crosbie budget. That is nonsense. The Crosbie budget provided for an increase of 18 cents. Everyone in Canada still remembers that 18-cent excise tax. That is what broke the back of the Conservatives—they came out and said it would be an 18-cent tax. The price of gasoline at the pumps had increased by 42 cents. That increase occurred before they brought down their budget.

In western Canada we are pleased with this energy package since it is designed to take away from the rich and give to the poor. It is designed along the lines of the Robin Hood principles which the NDP like so much. It is rather like the old Churchill doctrine in which the inherent vice of capitalism and free enterprise is the unequal distribution of blessings and the inherent virtue of socialism is the equal distribution of misery. As long as we all freeze it is not so bad. As long as we are all poor it is not so bad. As long as none of us can build a house it is not so bad; we can all live in igloos.

There is a great obsession at the present time to take away from the rich cats out west and redistribute those riches throughout the country. There is no regard paid to who created the wealth in the first place, nor to how that process is to be sustained. My colleagues and I from British Columbia gathered thousands of names on petitions which we brought to the House. We said that the western provinces of British Columbia and Alberta cannot live with an excise tax. The social engineers across the way said: My God, we really have the people upset. We had better not bring in an excise tax. So they locked up the press at eleven o'clock in the morning together with all the energy critics. They showed them the budget and the energy statement. That day the headlines read: Government forgoes excise tax. Sure enough, the minister walked in here at eight o'clock on that fateful night, the night

on which the final nail was driven into the coffin, and he said: It was against our better judgment, but we didn't impose an excise tax. Instead, we have imposed a consumer tax. The tax will be imposed on every thousand cubic feet of natural gas and it will amount to 30 cents. In fairness, we must pass the consumer tax on to the United States.

Mr. Speaker, we all know that in some way we are tied to what happens in the United States, economically and socially. But I did not know until the night of the budget that the Canadian government was in a position to impose a tax upon the consumers of the United States. That is a new one. There are other new taxes in here which will be tested in the courts. That tax was really a unique one. There is quite a bit of confusion down in the United States, because they are between presidents; maybe they didn't notice it. That lie had all the members in the press gallery actually believing what they were told. They were all locked up over in the railway station. They really believed this intelligent piece of deception. We must be a little smarter.

Then there is the 8 per cent petroleum revenue tax which is not a tax on profits and investment or anything else, but a tax which is taken right off the top. Every dollar loses 8 per cent to Ottawa. Then there are the Canadian ownership tax and the 80-cent a barrel refinery tax. The Canadian ownership tax is an unknown until certain things happen. The underlying principles in the government's energy package are very laudable. We will achieve a greater degree of Canadian control and ownership. But that must be analysed more thoroughly because, to the hon. members opposite, Canadian control means government control, and there is a difference.

● (0330)

We in western Canada have no problem seeing the difference because there is a company out there called BCRIC, a B.C. corporation through which the government has bought up resource companies and started some new enterprises and this and that. It has given shares to all the people in British Columbia and those shares are also being marketed on the stock market throughout the country and being purchased by Canadians.

Then there is the Petro-Canada story.

Mr. Kristiansen: Tell us the story.

Mr. Oberle: Those fine fellows to my left ride on the left wings of angels and they are soaring tonight. Then there is the PetroCan version of government ownership where the individual has no control. I became rather fed up with BCRIC the other day because it pulled some kind of stunt. It bought up Kaiser Coal. Some of the politicians received advance warnings because they had their hands in the pork barrel, and hon. members opposite would know all about that. The shares dropped from \$9 to \$6. I did not like the way they were managing the company. I purchased some BCRIC shares for myself and my children thinking it was an investment in the country and an opportunity to grow with its future. When I