

Excise Tax Act

more effective energy policy, a fair energy policy and one that stresses Canadian interests.

The Minister of Energy has also refused to admit that the energy policy of the Government has failed. As he moves through, he is simply tampering with bits and pieces, without developing an umbrella policy to let Canadians know where they are going or to let Canadian businesses know what to expect down the road. He is fooling with the buttons and pulling the levers, but not in a coherent, consistent way.

● (1650)

There are serious problems with the Petroleum Incentive Program, but the Minister of Energy refuses to acknowledge that. He refuses to allow an open investigation. The Auditor General, Members of Parliament and energy companies have all expressed concern, as have the provinces, but not the Minister of Energy. He thinks he may change a little of the format and require anybody drilling more than a \$50 million hole to put his signature on it before allowing the hole to go ahead. Unfortunately, this is tampering. It is a situation in which the Minister is failing to discharge his responsibility and protect the taxpayers' dollar. He should admit when the policy is wrong. It will be much better to admit when the policy is wrong than to begin to develop more appropriate mechanisms.

I will give another example of this Government's failures. I could go on all day with this. I am merely reflecting on the ironclad guarantees that an Alaska gas pipeline would be built. We were not to pour large amounts of natural gas into the United States through the pre-build. All kinds of benefits were to come to Canadians through the building of the Alaska gas pipeline. We received ironclad guarantees in this House, solid as the rock of Gibraltar. Unfortunately, we have all been hit by the rock of Gibraltar. I will not say: "I told you so". Everyone in this House knows that the pipeline will not be built. Everyone knows that the Canadian Government was sucked in in spite of advice to the contrary. They built the pre-build. I do not know why the Minister will not admit that in this House and give us an indication of the kind of natural gas policy to be followed and what will be done with the great relic it has built.

There is another interesting problem with natural gas. The Minister has admitted there are problems, that it does not conform to the expectations that were developed in the National Energy Program. In the face of collapsing contracts in the United States and a collapsing price regime the Minister, along with other individuals responsible for this, is providing giveaway prices for our natural gas in the United States. This seems to be in conjunction with a short-term surplus in the United States. Over the long term, a couple of years down the road, it is projected that the demand for Canadian natural gas will increase. We will be locked into a regime in which the giveaway prices of Canadian gas continue in the face of rapidly rising American demand.

The Conservative Party cannot move fast enough to get involved with this kind of policy. It cannot give it away fast enough or at a low enough price. The suggestion is that the

Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources cannot continue to tamper with the various symptoms of failure. The Government must admit the assumptions were wrong, the policy is not right and that it is prepared to take a new look at the situation. Without that, the resources of the Canadian people are in extreme jeopardy.

The Government, through its National Energy Program, made a commitment to build gas pipelines. It was a commitment to build pipelines all across Canada in a fair way. They said it was fair to expect the building of a gas pipeline to the Maritimes, to build lateral lines through the Province of Quebec and to commit funds to build a pipeline to Vancouver Island. So much for the fairness. Those Government funds have evaporated.

Additional funds have been added for Vancouver Island and an enormous amount of money into building the Quebec lateral. Undoubtedly a line will be built into the Maritimes. Unfortunately, the people on Vancouver Island feel like second-class citizens. They know that the money to build the pipeline to Vancouver Island does not exist. If it does exist, it will probably go for job-creation projects in Liberal ridings. I do not know. However, whatever happens, it is not fair. The money was committed to a gas pipeline on Vancouver Island. If the gas pipeline is not built, there should be options for that money to work with an off-oil program and an alternate energy program. The benefit should be provided to the people who live on Vancouver Island so that high energy costs are not discriminatory there. There should be some fairness and equitability.

Frankly, it is a failure. The Minister is again tampering with the symptoms of failure but not developing a policy. He is very close-mouthed. We are very close to the next federal election. If the Government dallies much longer without bringing forward a policy, this certainly will not be done in the dying session of this Parliament. Unfortunately, this Government refuses to admit that the policy collapsed, the assumptions are a failure and that it cannot move in an effective way to protect Canadians.

I have a great fear that the failure of the Liberal Party to fulfil its responsibility to the Canadian people will mean that if the Conservative Party becomes the Government, we will roll the clock back 100 years in energy policy. The Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Mulroney) and his no-policy Party will turn around and will actually encourage greater foreign investment. They have said that they will encourage greater control of our foreign resources. Ultimately Canadianization, fairer prices and a more effective energy policy with regard to energy security for the future will be placed back in the hands of the multinationals and no one will benefit. If the energy policy of the Conservative Party—and there is a very limited amount that we can see—comes to pass, Canadians will be in very bad shape. It is unfortunate they have their heads buried in the sand on this.

When I look at the energy policy, I tune myself to a statement by the former Minister of Finance in the Clark Government. He was interviewed following a Liberal Budget