

The Budget—Mr. Regan

I must remind hon. members that Petro-Canada is the corporation which the hon. member for St. John's West and the Right Hon. Leader of the Opposition just last year were determined to destroy, and judging from their statements a week or two ago they still take that position. I am sure they will not be heartened by the Gallup poll which showed in yesterday's *Toronto Star* that today 82 per cent of Canadians—up some 8 per cent since last year—recognize the value of Petro-Canada and want PetroCan to continue to do the sorts of things it is doing which are so vital to the Canadian economy.

Petro-Canada is the company which made Hibernia and Sable Island possible by participating in the cost of those drilling programs when the multinationals had backed off. These projects would not have gone ahead if Petro-Canada had not participated. PetroCan also helped in the Beaufort Sea. Petro-Canada is the company the Conservatives would have done away with. We have to decide in this House, in considering this budget, whether we want to salvage our destiny or become hewers of wood and drawers of water as the Conservative pattern of playing into the hands of those multinationals would have us do.

My time is short, and I want to move on. The budget also offers a plan to shelter our people, to an extent possible, from higher prices. We recognize that there must be higher prices, but only those necessary higher prices that contribute to the well-being of our people.

The budget of a former minister of finance, the hon. member for St. John's West, had three defects. First, it raised the price on old as well as on new oil, thus unnecessarily enriching foreigners, and it placed those foreign oil companies ahead of the Canadian working people. Instead, we provide the incentive for new oil while keeping some sense in the escalation of the price of the old, and guaranteeing greater Canadian ownership in the new production. I say to hon. members, decide which you prefer of the two budgets in that regard.

The second defect is that it proposed to raise prices, which we recognize must go up, but the proposed rate of increase would have placed impossible burdens on our consumers. The Tories pursued one goal, that of raising the prices to move toward sufficiency, but they forgot the other one, that of sheltering our people—a Tory tendency, I might say. I think when you consider that the Tory budget contributed no more to self-sufficiency than does ours, then the error of their ways can readily be seen. Our budget is less burdensome to the consumers. Before bringing down the budget we recognized the problems of our senior citizens and increased the guaranteed income supplement.

The third defect in the Tory budget placed an excise tax on gasoline. Heaven knows why. This 18-cent excise tax was on top of all the other increases which, in themselves, are larger than ours for oil and gas.

I want to recommend that Conservative members study the table published in yesterday's *Toronto Star* on gasoline prices, entitled Crosbie versus MacEachen. I tell hon. members to take a look at the comparisons. It shows for 1981 under the

MacEachen budget \$1.36 per gallon; under the Crosbie budget \$1.56. In 1984 under the Liberal budget the cost is \$1.95 per gallon, yet under the Conservative budget the cost would be \$2.63 per gallon.

Some hon. Members: Shame!

Mr. Paproski: That is how much the *Toronto Star* knows.

Mr. Regan: That is how much the hon. member knows.

Mr. Kempling: It is the "Trudeau Star".

Mr. Regan: No one in Canada, perhaps other than the Leader of the Opposition, is more sensitive to the success of the Minister of Finance's budget than the member for St. John's West. I notice that he used the word in his remarks yesterday or the day before, of "lemmings"—that little animal. I thought that that was an unfortunate example when you consider their suicidal trek to the sea caused by their budget last year.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Regan: Unfortunately the hon. member is unrepentant in his desire to solve energy prices on the backs of working people. Let me say this: some people say that our program is unfair to the west. Let us return to basics. Does the existence of an international cartel to multiply oil prices artificially justify to Canadians that we automatically impose the same havoc on our own people? Only if the answer is yes, only if our producers join in the looting of society can it be said that the producers are being punished by this budget.

If you regard the vast increase in the Canadian price of oil and gas products, you recognize no hardship in the national necessity of taking a very small part of the current price enhancement for the noble national purpose of repatriating our economy, meeting the costs of sheltering our consumers from unreasonable cost burdens.

To do that, if more funds are required for such purposes for government, do you tax industries with expanding revenue and profits, or do you expand those that are in trouble? Remember, this is a crisis situation. We have in this country a tradition of sharing. In the past, when its relative wealth to the rest of Canada was small compared to Alberta today, Ontario had to assume that burden. In my own province, and in other provinces, great benefits were received as a result of taxes paid in Ontario and the equalization which followed from that. I am sure the majority of the people of Alberta recognize that with their sudden increased wealth they have some role in Canadian sharing today.

● (1630)

We have in Canada an economic and fiscal crisis. This crisis is contemporaneously warping the fiscal and economic fibre of our country. The imbalance of revenue, if unredressed, will mean serious consequences for minimum national standards which must be maintained. I am sure hon. members will agree that they cannot picture Ethiopia and Switzerland as both