

Borrowing Authority

be in excess of 50 per cent. The federal government and the Minister of Energy know that full well. It is deception—gross deception.

If we are only paying 40 per cent of the world price for crude oil, what is happening to the other 60 per cent? I could make the argument that the federal government is taking that 60 per cent, turning it around and subsidizing the Canadian consumer. A great many people would agree with that. Authority after authority outside the oil industry have stated that the government's pricing strategy is ridiculous and unfair. I have said this before, and I will keep on saying it. Do you know of any industrialized country in the free world which is subsidizing the consumption of a scarce commodity? As I have said, it is a subsidy which will be paid for by our children. It is a subsidy to U.S. motorists, foreign air carriers and Saudi Arabia. It is madness.

While I am talking about the National Energy Program, and in that I have just one minute left, I would like to read to members opposite a letter from the Independent Petroleum Association of Canada dated January 26, 1981, to the Prime Minister. I will not bother reading the entire letter, but I will read this paragraph:

In view of the far-reaching national and international implications of the NEP, we respectfully request that your government establish a special joint committee of the Senate and House of Commons to undertake a full examination of the impact and ramifications of the National Energy Program. We believe the program merits the same level of thoughtful scrutiny as the constitutional reform proposals. The consequences are too serious to have the elements of the NEP treated as routine legislation.

I plead with members opposite to give that request their sincere consideration. I think we can all learn something from it. Let us put the National Energy Program out on the table. If it is as good as the Minister of Energy and the Minister of Finance say it is, and if it will create security for Canadians and if it is fair, then why hide behind it?

● (2110)

Let us refer the matter to committee where it will receive the attention of the people in the industry who know something about it. Let us put the facts on the table and provide the truth to the Canadian people.

Mr. David Orlikow (Winnipeg North): Mr. Speaker, the government proposes to borrow money in order to meet its expenses at a very serious time. Over one million people are unemployed in the country, and the majority of them are willing and anxious to work. The cost of living increased by over 11 per cent in the past year. The cost of food increased by over 13 per cent and the cost of energy increased by over 19 per cent in the past year. People from my constituency called me last month after they received their heating bills for December. For the first time these people, who live in small modest homes, were billed for expenditures in excess of \$100 for the month. It is not surprising when one realizes that the cost of gasoline went up by 30 per cent in the past year.

I could not participate in this debate without spending a few moments discussing some of the comments made by the hon.

member for Calgary South (Mr. Thomson). His argument is that government spending is intrinsically bad and private sector spending is obviously good. However, the government has established a hospital insurance plan which protects people from the Atlantic coast to the Pacific coast from financial disaster brought about because of a major illness.

Unlike the United States where there is no similar hospital insurance plan, Canada has a medical plan which pays the hospital bills of its citizens when they become ill. Canadians no longer worry about going bankrupt or into debt as a result of illness. This hospital plan is in place because of government policy, not because of a private insurance plan. Many people in Canada who have reached the age of 65 can live in some comfort and dignity because we have an old age security plan and a Canada Pension Plan. It is becoming increasingly obvious that private insurance plans operated by the private sector have not met the needs of the Canadian people.

The hon. member for Calgary South, who has now left the chamber, said that government operations usually result in failure and inefficiency, that we should leave such operations to the private sector. Where has the hon. member been? Why are the Government of Canada and the government of Ontario being asked to bail out Massey-Ferguson? It is not because of government that Massey-Ferguson is in its present financial situation. Where was the hon. member when we were discussing bailing out Chrysler? It was not the government which put Chrysler in its difficulty, it was inefficient management in the private sector.

The hon. member for Calgary South railed against public or state ownership. The hon. member comes from a province which has had a publicly owned telephone system for more than 50 years. We have not heard him suggesting that the Alberta government get rid of that telephone system. There is also a publicly-owned airline, Pacific Western Airlines, in Alberta. I wonder how the hon. member squares that fact with the principles he enunciated today. Then there is Ontario Hydro which was implemented originally by a Conservative provincial government and which has been operated all these years under a Conservative government regime.

I have named a number of the more prominent government-owned companies. There are companies in Alberta which are partly owned by the people of Alberta and by the government. The Alberta Gas Trunk Line, which is now called Nova, I understand, is 50 per cent owned by the Alberta government. The hon. member said again and again in the course of his speech that the countries in which the governments become involved in economic decision-making are facing difficulty. He went on to list countries which he implied had socialist governments and as a result were in a great deal of trouble.

The facts prove the hon. member wrong. The hon. member included France in his litany of countries which are in trouble. Any economic indicator at which one would care to look will show that France is doing better than Canada, and it is no accident, although there has not been a socialist government in France for more than 20 years. However, the government of France believes that it should be involved in the planning of