

Excise Tax Act

much as the market can bear. This is an extremely callous, unfortunate and self-defeating action by the Government, as it is realizing today.

The Government has taken away consumer programs such as the Canadian Home Insulation Program and the Canadian Oil Substitution Program. Just in case consumers save money by insulating their own homes, the Government decided to tax insulation materials that consumers would have to buy as a result of the elimination of this program. Furthermore, if consumers try to save money on fuel tax by heating their homes with wood, the Government decided to tax wood stoves as well. Apparently the Government is attempting to tax consumers from every angle. First, it eliminated the program, then it taxed insulation products, and finally it taxed wood stoves when consumers tried to go off oil. The Government is making an incredibly lethal attack on consumers in this country.

It has told Petro-Canada to make profits, beginning by decreasing competition so that consumers will not benefit from any price war that may occur. Rather than worry about consumers in the future, the Government is encouraging us to become more dependent on foreign imported oil so that consumers will be left scrambling when the price sky-rockets. It will guarantee our reliance on foreign oil by cancelling the incentive program which provided incentive to find future oil and gas supplies. The Government has not given any thought to a replacement program for the Petroleum Incentive Program. This is devastating to frontier exploration, including offshore exploration in this country.

Let us see how these facts relate to the attitude of the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources and the Government. When the Minister was speaking at an energy conference on March 8 in Vancouver, she described deregulation as much better for Canadian consumers. This is especially true in today's world of falling international oil prices because we cannot expect and be complacent about the fact that lower prices will continue over a long term. Therefore, we have to do two things. The first is to build in-protection for consumers should international prices surge. The second, is to get on with the job of conservation. The Minister said on March 8 that we have to protect our security of supply and that we have to get on with the job of conservation.

• (1115)

Let us deal with the second point first, that of getting on the with job of conservation. The Minister said this on March 8 and on March 31 the Canadian Oil Substitution Program was terminated and she cut back on the Canadian Home Insulation Program. The final blow in the heart of the Canadian Home Insulation Program will be dealt with in March, 1986. She is talking about conservation and at the same time she is doing away with the conservation program. She is saying: "We do not need to give financial incentives. We do not need to have this sort of program. We are going to give people information so that the conservation program will continue". That conservation program will not continue to the same degree because

the Government has stabbed the program in the back. Dollar for dollar the Government and the country got more benefit from energy spending on conservation than it did from any other energy expenditure which it instituted.

Let us look at number one. The Minister has said that first we must build in a protection for consumers should international prices surge. She is saying that we have to develop our energy sources. This is the same Minister who today is saying that we are working on a replacement for the Petroleum Incentive Program. On March 8 she said we must build a protection for consumers should international prices surge. Last November she said that her objective was to prevent a lull in offshore activity. How do you reconcile the statements of last November and the statement on March 8 with what this Minister is doing to the Petroleum Incentive Program, taking away the incentive for offshore, taking away the incentive to develop the energy sources off Nova Scotia and Newfoundland and in the Beaufort Sea, Mr. Speaker? Not only that, the Minister just recently postponed the bi-provincial Husky upgrader project. The former Liberal Government has promised a loan guarantee of \$780 million plus a \$50 million grant to cover construction costs. The Minister has completely gone against what she has been saying. It is incredible that she says one thing and does another.

The Government has no regard for what it is saying. It has no regard for matching what it says to what it does. It is insulting to people, not to mention its absolute devastation of our energy program. The whole this is ludicrous and it gets wilder and wilder.

The Government is now toying with natural gas pricing. It is bad enough that the Government did not come up with something in the Western Accord last spring. The Government said: "We are going to provide a natural gas pricing arrangement by November 1". To begin with, November 1 was not a good date. It should have been September 1 or even October 1. November 1 is the beginning of the contractual year for natural gas contracts. What she is saying is, "At best we are going to give you an arrangement on the very day you must enter into your contract for the next contractual energy year. It is ludicrous to wait that long, but anyway the Minister gave the date of November 1.

The Government has had plenty of time to reach an agreement but we still do not have an agreement on natural gas prices. The whole picture on natural gas pricing and exporting, the whole structure of natural gas commerce is in a state of limbo. November 1, is next Friday, which is four days away. Why has the Minister placed this very important aspect of our economy in a complete state of limbo and confusion? Natural gas exports mean \$4 billion per year to Canada. She is taking a \$4 billion benefit to the country and throwing it into a complete state of confusion.

• (1120)

I should like to talk for a moment about the offshore, the replacement of the petroleum incentive program and the amendments to the Canada-Nova Scotia agreement. After the