

The Budget—Hon. B. Kaplan

harder each year until this election. Starting with the current election—and I put the figures on the record that show this—the purpose of the Government was not to try to place a heavier burden on those more able to pay. It was the reverse. It was to try to help the rich people in Canada get richer faster by paying less taxes and to ask those at the middle and at the bottom—contrary to what had been done by former Liberal Governments—to pay more of the tax burden.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): The Hon. Member still has a couple of minutes for questions or comments.

Mr. McKenzie: Mr. Speaker, I hope the Hon. Member for York Centre (Mr. Kaplan) will pass along his concerns to the Liberal Government of Quebec about the high price of gas, because it puts some very high new taxes on gas. That is why the price of gas is so high in Ottawa. It is not going to be lowered here, because even if it is higher here than in other parts of Canada, people from Quebec still come here to buy gasoline.

I do not know why the Hon. Member did not mention the Liberal promise in the 1980 election that it was going to give the Canadian people cheap gas. After the Liberals and the NDP got together to support the National Energy Program, gas went up by \$1.25 a gallon. The Canadian people had to fork out \$1.1 billion to buy Petrofina, which was one of the poorest deals which has ever been forced upon the Canadian people. That deal is still under investigation by the Auditor General. And \$1 million in legal fees went to some law firm in Switzerland that handled the Petrofina deal.

It is very interesting to listen to the Hon. Member for Winnipeg North (Mr. Orlikow) who is so worried about high taxes. We have an NDP Government in Manitoba, a province which has the highest taxes in the country, but I do not hear any Hon. Members of the New Democratic Party talking about the high taxes in Manitoba.

Mr. Parry: That is rubbish.

Mr. McKenzie: Listen to them squeal and holler. Perhaps they will bring up the subject of high taxes in Manitoba some day. The reason we have high taxes in Canada is that we have to pay for all of our social programs which, between the provinces and the federal Government, amount to \$62 billion a year. The United States has cheap gas but it does not have a cheap medical program. It has cheap alcohol and cheap tobacco because it does not have the social programs we do.

The 60 days is just about over for the oil companies. If the price of gas does not come down pretty quickly, you can be sure, Mr. Speaker, that Hon. Members on this side will be up on their feet complaining and raising the very dickens with the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources (Miss Carney) about the high cost of gas.

Mr. Parry: You haven't done it yet.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): I will give the Hon. Member for York Centre (Mr. Kaplan) an opportunity to rebut.

Mr. Kaplan: I know, and I believe the Canadian people know, that we do not get social programs for free. We have medicare here. They do not have that in the United States. We get to send our kids to university for much lower fees than people do in the United States. We know we do not get those things for free. The people in this country know they have to pay some taxes. My complaint is not about that, but about the way in which the burden is shared, the fact that the Government is letting rich people off the hook for these taxes and is asking people at the middle and at the bottom to pay more.

With respect to the 1980 promise of cheap gas—I am glad I have the opportunity to say a word about that—it is true that when the National Energy Program came into effect the price of gas jumped at the pumps. However, in the world market it jumped even more. When the Western Accord came in, the creature of this new Government, prices jumped, but when they fell in the United States, they continued to remain high here.

Mr. McKenzie: A lot of people went back to work in Alberta.

Mr. Kaplan: We can argue about \$1 million fees, and so on, but it is undeniable that when the National Energy Program was on, Americans would come to our country to fill their tanks. They would come to Windsor and Vancouver to fill their tanks, and gas stations were growing in number. Now that we have the Western Accord—and this is also undeniable—Canadians are going to the United States to fill their tanks with gas. So much for who is being fair with the consumers.

In our day, Americans wanted to take advantage of the Canadian system. In this day, the Conservative day, Canadians are escaping to the United States to get a tank full of gas.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): The time for questions and comments has now terminated.

● (1210)

Mr. Stan J. Hovdebo (Prince Albert): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate this opportunity to say a few words with respect to the Budget. Since it has to be but a few words I will zero-in on its effects on agriculture.

The problems facing agriculture are well defined. I am sure there is not one person in the House or in the agricultural community who does not recognize what the problems are and even has some idea with respect to possible solutions. We know what is wrong with agriculture. I am sure that even farmer Wilson, the Minister of Finance (Mr. Wilson), knows what the problems facing agriculture are. The solution is fairly obvious. If we were to pay enough for commodities produced by farmers then we would not have the problems with which farmers are now concerned. This would make it possible for farmers to pay their debts. Unfortunately, in the Budget, or in