

The Budget—Mr. Ferguson

and ultimately it is only those workers who are laid off, either seasonally or otherwise, who are the benefactors.

As well there are provisions for exemptions related to metric conversion in the retail sector. Under these provisions kits and parts to convert retail scales to metric are exempt from federal sales tax and duty. Sales tax on purchases of new metric scales is reduced by one-half, and a 100 per cent immediate write-off for income tax purposes is provided for metric scales used in small businesses. Also, small businesses will benefit from the extension of the small business development bond issue to March 31, 1981. Technical amendments are proposed to better define the scope of the small business deduction, that special low rate applicable to the Canadian active business income of small corporations.

As I have indicated thus far, this budget is bold and responsible, securing our energy supplies and ensuring that those non-renewable resources will be controlled by Canadians. Also it recognizes the needs of the taxpayer, the home owner, the need for conservation, the need for renewable sources of energy, the needs of small business and the need for ensuring adequate unemployment benefits.

One other aspect I want to emphasize is the recognition of the needs of the handicapped and their requirement for special equipment. On last Sunday afternoon I was approached by a mother in my constituency who was asking about the possibility of removing the duty on television captioning devices for the deaf. Her son was deaf and the captioning device was not manufactured in Canada. Naturally I was very pleased to phone her last night and advise her the customs tariff on such items had been removed in this budget and that her son would be able to enjoy another of the pleasures which so many of us take for granted.

This budget is a responsive one. It is responsive to the voice of the people. The government was listening to the provinces when they said they could not accept an export tax on natural gas. We were listening when the people of this nation said they wanted a continuation of indexing. We were proven right when a poll indicated that 82 per cent of our people wanted Petro-Canada to continue as a vital and integral part of our energy system. This budget is a wide-ranging one. The implication of the industrial strategy, the provisions for railroads to upgrade their tracking systems and the provisions for extended pipelines will have spin-off effects on our economy. All these measures will provide us with a solid economic base and give us the confidence to proceed into the decade of the eighties.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McKenzie: Mr. Speaker, the figures of the hon. member were most informative. Would he entertain a brief question at this time?

Mr. Ferguson: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. McKenzie: I was very interested in the hon. member's figures concerning the price of gas, what they would have been under the December budget and what they will be under the

new budget. Has he allowed for the increase in gas prices in his figures? In less than a year they have increased by 40 cents per gallon. We were told in the February election that under the Liberals the price of gas would be increasing only by a very small amount, but in certain parts of Canada it has increased 40 cents a gallon. The Minister of Finance (Mr. MacEachen) stated in the question period this afternoon that they would not be putting on an 18-cent a gallon tax. Is the 40-cent increase in less than one year included in the figures the hon. member related to the House this evening?

Mr. Ferguson: Yes, they are 1981 projected figures. Perhaps I should point out that I was very much involved in this issue during the campaign. As a matter of fact, I should give credit to my opponent in the campaign who was a previous member of the House. He realized the harshness of the excise tax being proposed. He realized the impact it would have on the rural economy across Canada. Because of those facts, in the last week of the campaign he stated publicly that he could not support the 18-cent excise tax.

Mr. Harvie Andre (Calgary Centre): Mr. Speaker, I compliment the hon. member for Lambton-Middlesex (Mr. Ferguson) on how well he read his speech, but I have never heard a speech read so well which contained so many inaccuracies, distortions and downright mistruths. The pathetic thing—and I say this sincerely—is that he does not recognize the impact; he believes what he read. I do not recall a time during my eight years in Parliament—and as a matter of fact it is eight years today—when I was more distressed, alarmed or concerned about the future of my country.

Since the Liberal party was re-elected last February the country has been subjected to more abuse, wrong-headed, stubborn, insane and immoral government actions than at any time in this country's history. The culmination was reached in this budget.

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I want to say this as dispassionately as I can because it is not political rhetoric but rather a genuine fear on my part for the continuing integrity of our country and for our democracy as the result of the events in these few months. We have seen from this government in the last few months the most cynical, manipulative and dishonest approach to governing of which I am aware in any democratic country. Witness their advertising campaigns designed for mind management of the type I read about as a school kid in George Orwell's "1984", the cynical, Machiavellian manoeuvres of the type described in the Kirby document to pit one province against the other, one region against the other, and to accomplish goals for which no mandate was sought or received from the people of Canada, and all this in the name of national unity.

The pathetic thing about this, Mr. Speaker, is that there are sincere Canadians over there, I believe—people who genuinely do not understand what they are doing to this country. That is what is so sad. It is sad that such intelligent, dedicated people—they ran for office, so obviously they have an interest