

Budget '82

Bankrolling Davis' greed

Mayor Pete Pomeroy, who's beginning to show his political colors more and more these days, may be able to find some good news in the provincial budget tabled by treasurer Frank Miller Thursday, but we certainly can't.

Yes, Mr. Mayor, the budget certainly does project the message to us all to "tighten your belts" and obviously had to impose new taxes, but for reasons that we may never know, the Miller budget of '82 will go down in history as the most vicious gouging of the taxpayers' wallets in recent years.

That Ontario's Opposition parties must struggle for a chance to scrutinize the budget before the Legislature is evidence enough of the dangers of majority government. Viewed in light of fiscal problems now facing every facet of society, the new budget can only be regarded as an irresponsible and selfish attempt to bankroll Premier Bill Davis' future dreams, be they huge jetliners or a bigger cut of world's energy profits.

He must have something in mind; there is no logical explanation for most of the measures introduced through the treasurer's office last week.

The new budget's effect on the Halton board of education is well-documented elsewhere in today's Herald, but so far-reaching are its other effects that no one will escape its extra - and unnecessary - bites.

Perhaps the best reflection on the Conservative govern-

ment's approach to this year's budget was Mr. Miller's comments Monday to the Globe and Mail. Defending his decision to impose a seven per cent sales tax on a whole slew of previously untaxed items, the treasurer said he doesn't consider such things as soap and tampons "absolutely essential" to the average consumer.

Hard financial times indeed demand that we do without luxuries, but soap is hardly a luxury.

Still think the Ontario government is just doing its job and that municipalities will simply have to find a way to accommodate these new costs? Wait until the next municipal budgets are passed a year from now.

Mayor Pomeroy's rosy view of the budget notwithstanding, Halton Hills council must now pay for numerous things that were free or subsidized before. Any capital projects undertaken here will cost considerably more because of the new sales tax on building materials, among other items.

The reasoning behind the budget will remain a mystery until its effects have run their course. With no chance of the Opposition stopping a majority government's budget, we can only look forward to the next provincial election, when Premier Davis will be winging overhead in his new \$10 million jet, glancing down at the closed stores and factories in the hope that, once again, the voters will have forgotten his arrogance and greediness.



Shortsightedness in feds' national energy vision



Ottawa Report

By Stewart MacLeod

Ottawa Bureau of The Herald
Everything is clearer with hindsight, but it's still difficult to understand why the federal government, in developing its so-called industrial strategy, didn't seem to make any provisions for the possibility of an oil glut and falling prices.

The National Energy Program was based entirely on the prediction that a petroleum shortage would continue to boost prices into the distant future, thus making viable the development of massive projects to develop the country's vast oil sands. And it was on these "megaprojects" that the government built its industrial strategy and its economic recovery program. As recently as three months ago, we were being told how these great developments would be the cornerstone of our recovery. Remarkably, it didn't seem to enter anyone's mind that we now would be faced with an oil glut, falling prices and, as a result, an economic recovery program that appears to be in tatters.

It's little wonder that the opposition is angry. The fact that they are somewhat short on solutions themselves is beside the point at the moment; what's affecting us is government policies, not opposition alternatives.

OTHERS DOUBTFUL
It's not all the fault of governments that the \$12.9 billion Alameda Project has collapsed. World economic conditions, and particularly astronomical interest rates, are affecting all megaprojects, and we can't blame the Trudeau government for the collapse of a similar project in Colorado. Even rich petroleum companies can't cope with the interest charges on billions of dollars to finance these projects. And it's hard to see how governments could become more deeply involved without simply taking over the Alameda as a Crown endeavor. Neither Ottawa nor Alberta want that.

And it's not just Alameda. When it was suspended, everyone knew that other similar projects were unlikely to proceed, and while Energy Minister Marc Lalonde said new emphasis would be placed on the Cold Lake project, which has been postponed for three years by Imperial Oil, there was no real optimism that this would proceed. If Gulf, Shell and other partners in Alameda couldn't justify going ahead with that development, there is little chance, in the foreseeable future, that Imperial will try to raise \$14 billion for Cold Lake. Nor is Shell likely to proceed with another planned \$13 billion project near Peace River. As well, there are a couple of other

\$14 billion projects that are likely to die on the drawing boards until world supplies, and interest rates, justify their development. And given the intensive search for alternate energy, along with the sharp decline in conventional petroleum consumption, there is a real possibility that the development of the oil sands will never become a viable proposition.

NO FORESIGHT
Since the official suspension of Alameda, the government has been falling over itself to list other major projects that may help pull the country out of its recession. But most of them, such as the industrial benefits of Canada's new fighter-aircraft program, have nothing to do with petroleum megaprojects. They were to be in addition to Alameda, the Alaska Natural Gas Pipeline - which has been postponed for at least two years - and other megaprojects. There is absolutely no doubt that the entire foundation of our recovery program were those megaprojects. The industrial spinoffs would have been enormous.

And by touting these doomed megaprojects as our economic saviours, the government now must expect to bear the burden of their failure. Armed with hindsight, but given the government's vast array of economists who are supposed to be armed with foresight, it's difficult to understand why the danger signals would not have been seen just a few months ago. It's little wonder the government is embarrassed.

Suncor stock purchase spells 'fiasco' for Tories



Queen's Park

By Derek Nelson

Queen's Park Bureau of The Herald
Genuine outrage is a relatively rare emotion in the Legislature. Much of the indignation expressed here is manufactured or reflex in origin.

But that isn't true of the Conservative government's purchase of 25 per cent of the U.S.-owned oil company Suncor. It ignites sparks on both sides of the Assembly.

The most recent episode saw the Liberals devote all their queries and rhetorical assaults during question period here to the one topic of Suncor. That kind of action is unusual and helps focus on the issue at hand. It also tends to scatter the questions all over the map on endless irrelevancies.

In the end, Liberal Leader David Peterson said he would move no-confidence in the Tory regime on the grounds its "irresponsible expenditure" of \$650 million to buy Suncor was a failure to "manage public funds properly."

SECOND POINT
Unfortunately, he then went on to suggest the government has "failed to fully disclose the details of the transaction" and, as a result, has "shown contempt for the Assembly."

His second point has nothing to do with the first and, in fact the government's position on releasing further details is reasonable. Most are covered by an agreement with Suncor's U.S.-parent company Sun Oil that they

remain secret, mainly for commercial reasons.

(This does not excuse the tardy and slipshod way the Tories made information available at the time the purchase was announced. Everything then had to be pried loose - tidbit by tidbit.)

Meanwhile the New Democrats were calling for a public inquiry to see if the government "misused and mispent" \$650 million, as NDP Acting Leader Jim Foulds said.

But the government rejects that, rightly, as ludicrous.

MAIN IDEA

What really is important about the Suncor deal has little to do with the verbal pyrotechnics in the Assembly, since few if any of the questions asked are actually intended to elicit information.

Peterson caught it in the first part of his promised motion.

Was increasing the provincial deficit by \$325 million immediately, and probably by \$1 billion or so over the life of the deal, a reasonable thing to do for a government that can't cover its existing expenses?

For the Liberals the answer is no,

and every time the Tories taunt opposition benches about where they would cut spending - the Grits now cry Suncor. That kind of money could be better spent elsewhere.

For New Democrats the answer is no because 25 per cent buys neither control nor power, 51 per cent being the NDP's preferred option.

TORY ANSWER

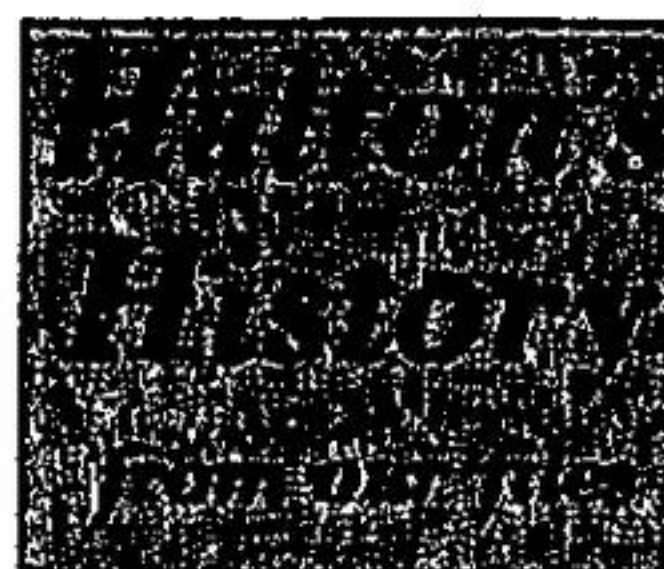
But the Conservatives say increasing energy security in this country is too vital a matter to let pass and that helping make Suncor Canadian was a necessary and legitimate aid to the federal government's National Energy Policy.

Besides, they argue, it is a good deal that will make Ontario money.

But even if that were true (and neither opposition party believes it), would Ontario then be justified in buying a distillery? It, too, would be bound to make money.

As for the National Energy Policy - it is precisely that, a federal scheme to nationalize the oil industry. Why should Ontario be involved?

Suncor is going to haunt the Conservatives for a long time to come.



THIRTY YEARS AGO—Oh, for the good old days. A half pound package of side bacon costs 30 cents; a half pound tin of red salmon costs 35 cents; a pound of cocoa 71 cents; a ten-pound bag of white sugar sells for 97 cents and naval oranges are 34 cents a dozen.

TWENTY YEARS AGO—The player that many hockey fans felt provided the "umph" in the Georgetown Raider defense, Moe Galand, has been officially named the club's most valuable player. The announcement was made Thursday at a meeting of the Raider executive. Moe will receive the Most Valuable P/ayer trophy at a party next month. He joined the Raiders when the 1961-62 campaign was seven games old. This past season Moe was third in Central Ontario hockey league scoring points and had the best points per game average in the loop.

TEN YEARS AGO—A wage dispute between the Georgetown Police Commission and the Police Association has gone to arbitration, after the Police Commission rejected a \$2,000 increase for a first class constable, sought by the Police Association. The proposed increase would up the first class constable from \$9,500 to \$11,500. The present rates are \$7,300 for a probationary constable, \$9,500 for a first class constable, \$10,000 for a probationary detective, \$10,500 for a patrol sergeant and \$11,500 for a sergeant.

ONE YEAR AGO—About 40 town public works employees could be in a legal strike position in June if negotiations between management and the Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE) fail to reach another one-year agreement. CUPE national representative Gord Allen told The Herald Wednesday that conciliation efforts between the two parties broke down last Friday. Although he would not disclose details of the union's demands, Mr. Allen said wages remain the primary issue, adding that other items will "fall into place" once new hourly rates are established.

POET'S CORNER Early Settlers A true story

In Halton Hills, many years ago where the big tall timbers used to grow Settlers were cutting trees and clearing land Building barns and cabins, work they did understand. The Blacksmith was a busy man, blowing up the fire Fixing wedges, axes, chisels and wagon tire Men were chopping trees, dragged in a burning heap Old men watched the fires all night, while younger men sleep. While the fires they glow all night Drove the black bears away in fright Ozen they were drove hard by hand As much as any beast could barely stand. Down by the stream a few Indians dwell They were friendly, as far as they could tell Meredith, a pioneer settler, saw a distant light He lived in Limehouse, he followed it that night. It led him to the Fourth Line Cabin, on the rock He was met at the door, with a butcherknife on the lock There he met a new neighbor on this trip A man named Nichols, a settler came by ship. He said there was an Indian stealing his supplies So he watched for that thief, with very sharp eyes, On the way home his reed torch was going dead Knocked off the ashes for a new light instead. It wasn't a stump, but a black bear's head The bear was afraid, the sparks so red Away ran the bear, afraid with fright The man was glad when he got out of sight.

—By Albert Brooks, RR2 Acton



JUST TO MAKE SURE

That's \$483 collected by Cancer Society volunteer chairman for Norval and area Deanna Reed. Mrs. Reed, wife of MPP Julian, presented the money to drive chairman "Steamer" Emmerson last week. The Georgetown Cancer Society passed its goal of \$33,000, becoming the first unit to surpass its goal in the central counties district, which includes Oakville, Dufferin Counties, Milton and Acton. Campaign treasurer Joe Stanley of Georgetown was jubilant over the good news and said it's going to be hard to pick a goal for next year's drive.

(Herald photo)



COOKIE MONSTER ALERT

Chocolate chip cookies were going fast at the Wrigglesworth spring fair Friday. Shane Perce, 10, couldn't resist and bought a couple from Jody Money Penny, 12, who was manning the baketable.

(Herald photo)

Councillors at drop-in for town hall discussions

Esqueping and Georgetown councillors who voted against a proposal to restore the former Acton town hall and later rejected a suggestion that the building should be sold to a specially-organized board of trustees for \$1, will have an opportunity to explain their decisions to Acton residents this Friday. Councillors Mike Armstrong, Walter Biehn, Harry Levy, George Maltby, Russ Miller, Marilyn Serjeantson and Pam Sheldon were invited to Acton's Friday drop-in in the new community services offices, at 113 Mill Street (across from the Canadian Tire outlet) by Acton Coun. Dave Whiting. Advertisements placed jointly by the Acton and town hall restoration committees have appeared recently in The Herald, asking residents to support their bid to save the hall. The drop-in opens at 1 p.m.