

While I have spoken of the minister's speech last night as a budget, in one way it cannot really be described as a budget. The minister has admitted the government has no agreement at all with the producing provinces on the oil price increase he and the government want and which has been set out in the budget. He has no agreement on the new tax on additional oil company revenues from these high prices. As I said last night, this tax is not even described in the budget. It is not in the ways and means motion.

So two basic fundamental factors on which this Conservative budget are based are as yet unknown. They are hypothetical. This means we are being asked to vote on a hypothetical document, a phantom document which the minister calls the budget.

The minister says he is going to bring in a bill next year to legislate this new energy revenue tax.

An hon. Member: He won't be around.

Mr. Gray: But even if he is around for a few months next year, he will be doing so, in spite of his complaint about the Liberals using fine tuning because they presented budgetary statements more than once every 12 months. If this is not fine tuning, then at least it shows that the Conservative government is completely out of tune as it shows its inability to manage the Canadian economy. This document is a prime example of Conservative mismanagement and of their inability to lead and to govern.

The minister said in his speech that he will be taking steps to move away from the traditional budget secrecy. Let us look at what he has done already when it comes to this new energy revenue tax that he and the Prime Minister said in the House and at the meeting of first ministers they want to have imposed. The Prime Minister has already admitted, well before the budget was presented, that officials of the government were consulting with the oil industry about the form of this energy self-sufficiency tax, the form of this tax which was mentioned in the budget last night. The minister's officials did not ask lower and middle-income Canadians whether they wanted a higher excise tax on gasoline. They did not even ask them whether they liked the form, or what ideas they had on the form of such a tax. The minister's officials did not ask working people across the country whether they wanted higher unemployment insurance premiums, or even about their form.

The Minister of Finance has an approach to budget secrecy, which he has not outlined in his statement last night. This approach involves a different concept of secrecy, a different concept of consultation when it comes to discussing taxes of interest to the multinational oil companies, than the concept of secrecy, the concept of consultation on measures directly affecting individual Canadians. I say that is the wrong approach to budget secrecy. I happen to believe that we should be getting away in this House from traditional budget secrecy concepts. I think they are outmoded, I think they hamper proper and meaningful discussions of tax measures. What we need is more openness by the government about those parts of the budget that really matter to all Canadians. It means

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making proposals to the House in the budget statement on the basis that the government is open to changing them as a result of input from members of Parliament and Canadians generally at hearings, not in Committee of the Whole, but of a parliamentary committee after the budget is presented. I think that is the approach we should have to a change in budget secrecy, not two standards, not two measures, one for the minister's friends, one for the government's friends the multinational oil companies, and another standard when it comes to individual Canadians.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

An hon. Member: Tell that to Bronfman.

Mr. Gray: Essentially this budget hits the little guy in this country. If the little guy decides to have a smoke or a drink to try to find some solace from the impact of this Conservative budget, he will still be reminded of its unfair impact. He will also be reminded every time he pays for gasoline at a service station. He will be reminded every time he has fuel oil delivered to his home.

At the opening of my remarks, I spoke of how the Conservatives are like the Bourbon kings of France who learned nothing and remembered nothing. But I think the lower and middle-income Canadians and their families will remember this Conservative hard times budget and they will learn, as the result of its impact on them, the negative impact on them, of this budget, never again to trust the Conservatives with their votes. What we should have had from the Conservatives last night was a budget that would reduce inflation, strengthen the economy and create more jobs for Canadians, now, next year, and in the years to come. Instead, this budget brings Canadians a higher cost of living, including higher food prices, more unemployment and no economic growth, as well as higher gasoline and fuel oil prices, and higher taxes.

In his speech the Minister of Finance quoted Sir Wilfrid Laurier who said the twentieth century will belong to Canada. I say to this House that the twentieth century should belong to Canada and that largely because of the efforts of Liberal governments it has belonged to Canadians generally, but the twentieth century will not belong to Canada if the harmful and negative measures in this Conservative budget ever come into effect.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

● (1630)

Mr. Gray: Therefore, Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the hon. member for Outremont (Mr. Lalonde):

That all the words after "that" be struck out, and that the following be added: this House condemns the government for its budget which will place an unfair and unnecessary burden of higher gasoline prices, higher fuel oil prices, and higher taxes on middle and lower-income Canadians.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

[*Translation*]

Mr. Olivier: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order.