

Energy

In the meantime, the same Quebeckers that were convinced to reject an 18-cent increase, a small short-term sacrifice required to ensure Quebec's and Canada's economic future, achieve self-sufficiency and guarantee oil supplies to Quebec, these same Quebeckers have just gone through the 15-cent increase since February 18, 1980. Moreover, the former finance minister's budget that Liberals used as an excuse to defeat the Clark government also proposed to give Quebec families tax credits to offset all price increases. Right now this Liberal government is increasing oil prices 15 cents, without any tax credit.

In April, 1980, each Quebec family with revenues below \$21,000 would have received a \$15 per child and \$40 per adult tax credit, with \$30 per child and \$80 per adult in 1981. So the average Quebec family would have received in 1981 a \$220 tax credit, whether they paid taxes or not. Since that time Quebeckers saved 3 cents per gallon with the 15-cent increase for which they are receiving no tax credit, which they had to pay without hope of recovering it. They had to absorb the total increase needed without any compensation based on their revenue, low or otherwise. All paid equally, and the increase does not apply only to all but heating fuel. Our excise tax did not apply to heating fuel.

In the meantime, Liberals in Ottawa promised not to increase the cost of oil as much as Progressive Conservatives were proposing in order to ensure Quebeckers safe supplies of oil and develop Canadian wells to replace foreign ones. We were proposing a \$4 increase for 1980 and a \$4.50 one for 1981 and 1982. Until now, without the benefits of our integrated program that would have led to self-sufficiency in 1990, Liberals here in Ottawa would have allowed a \$3 per barrel direct and indirect increase, but the price is now \$4 more per barrel. In the meantime, the cost of subsidies we are paying on foreign oil is increasing tremendously.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, because you are indicating that my time is coming to an end, Quebeckers will have saved 3 cents to find themselves confronted with the danger of losing the free use of their cars if foreign oil becomes scarce. Mr. Speaker, the oil matter is basic in Quebec as elsewhere. The essential supply of oil must be ensured until Quebec can partially rely on its alternative regional resources.

We are aware of the importance of the debate. I deplore the fact that we have been discussing this matter for ten years. I cannot accept that the government should give, or try to give, the impression that it has found a new formula. Today, the blame lies with the fact that this government has been in power too long. It has not had the foresight to give Canada the autonomy we all wish for on both sides of the House.

To my mind, it is our duty to remind them of their faults and failure with regard to that foresight, which has been sadly lacking in parliamentary debates. If they were to make proposals to achieve self-sufficiency by taking into account private enterprise, because here in Canada private enterprise is impor-

tant, they could get some form of support. But it is our duty to call them to order when they do not offer any guarantees or enough aid to the underprivileged when the time comes to make proposals in energy matters.

Mr. Demers: I should like to ask the hon. member for Joliette (Mr. La Salle) if he will allow me a question.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Blaker): With the permission of the hon. member for Joliette.

Mr. Demers: The hon. member for Joliette claims that since the Liberal government took over power on February 18 last, the price of gas has gone up by 15 cents a gallon. I should like to know whether, had his own party stayed in power, Canadians and Quebeckers in particular would not now be paying roughly the same increase, that is 15 cents a gallon plus an excise tax of 18 cents. I should like to be enlightened on that point.

Mr. La Salle: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member for Duvernay (Mr. Demers) has surely read the proposal of the last budget where it is clear that we were about to legislate an increase as well as a tax credit for those who earn \$21,000 or less. Our position was very clear. It was aimed, precisely as the minister said today, at ensuring self-sufficiency in the field of energy. As a result, we wanted to encourage Canadians toward a very specific goal, that of saving energy. We needed millions of dollars—the minister spoke about it today—to achieve that self-sufficiency, that self-reliance. I believe we were protecting those who were unable to pay. We were asking Canadians to recognize the need to make certain sacrifices. The difference was that we had the courage to explain their needs to Canadians while the Liberals hid behind an increase which will come one way or another.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Blaker): The hon. member for Témiscamingue (Mr. Tousignant) on a point of order.

Mr. Tousignant: Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the hon. member for Joliette (Mr. La Salle) if he would accept one more question?

Mr. La Salle: Yes, certainly.

Mr. Tousignant: The hon. member recognizes that the Progressive Conservatives had suggested an increase of \$4 a barrel. At the present time, oil prices have increased somewhat less. During the election campaign, the Liberals forecast that the price of oil might increase by the amount mentioned by the Progressive Conservatives but perhaps by less. In view of the 18-cent tax and the 7-cent reimbursement tax for those who use vehicles for commercial purposes, which makes 25 cents a gallon, can the hon. member figure out how much on a gas tank of 20 gallons these 25 cents a gallon, which we have saved Canadian taxpayers, represent?