

### Energy

changes or what would happen to the deficit. We certainly do not want to see a deficit greater than the one that is forecast."

That was said by the then minister of finance. One sees the headline in the *Toronto Star*, "Crosbie sees even higher gas prices". One sees in the *Citizen*, "Crosbie warns of higher oil costs". One sees in *The Gazette*, "Tories see worse gas hike". That was January, 1980. This is the type of thing that the hon. member for Kingston and the Islands could have said to her electorate during the weekend. She could have said, "You are very lucky that the Conservatives could not go ahead with their budget and that they were defeated because, indeed, the situation would have been very much worse as far as the consumer is concerned".

**An hon. Member:** Shame, Marc! You are going to have to go to confession.

**An hon. Member:** They don't like it, Marc.

**Mr. Lalonde:** Another thing that the hon. member could have said to her voters is this. Indeed, she referred to the punishment of consumers. I think in all honesty she should have said to her voters that the major part of that so-called punishment arises from what many have called the Loughheed levy resulting from the cutbacks which have been imposed by the government of Alberta. These cutbacks were 60,000 barrels in April and another 60,000 barrels in June, for a total of 120,000 barrels a day. This is the type of cutbacks we have had.

I have indicated that if the government of Alberta were to decide today to eliminate those cutbacks, which are completely unnecessary, counterproductive, are not at all required in the circumstances and are really a regrettable step taken by a provincial government, tomorrow morning we could reduce the price of gasoline by seven and a quarter cents per gallon. That is the type of thing which could be done had we not had the decision taken by the Alberta government. That is another thing she could have said to her voters.

The hon. member could also have gone on to say, "Look at the Liberal commitment during the election and you will see that the Liberals have respected their commitments to the letter, and they have indicated that they will respect their commitments."

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Lalonde:** In that election there were two basic commitments. There were a number of other commitments which we have already fulfilled, in the area of conservation, with regard to Petro-Canada—which the Conservatives were going to destroy—with regard to setting up a corporation for the conservation of energy and with regard to helping consumers convert to other forms of energy and oil. All these commitments have been respected, and these are already in place.

In addition, we said to the Canadian consumer in 1980, "We will not have an 18-cent excise tax and the price at the wellhead will be lower than it would have been under the Conservatives." What did we do? There was no 18-cent tax in

1980, and the price of oil went up by \$3.80 rather than \$4, as had been foreseen by the Conservative government, at the wellhead. This is what happened in 1980, and this is where a good part of the \$2.2 billion savings to the consumers comes from.

Then the hon. member could also have said that the Liberals made a second commitment. The Liberals said, "Not only will Canadians have a lower price in 1980 than has been foreseen by the Conservative budget"—and specified that the 18-cent tax would not be there—but they also said, "Over four years the National Energy Program will produce a price to the consumer which will be lower than the one which had been foreseen by the Conservative budget". This is, again, a commitment. She could have said that the Liberals have kept it up until now, and they will keep it during this current mandate.

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Lalonde:** Again, does one remember that the Conservatives said in their budget that oil would cost 75 per cent of world price at the wellhead, and then 85 per cent of the world price at the wellhead in 1983 and 1984? Under the Liberal program, the National Energy Program, it is projected that the price at the wellhead will be about \$40 in July, 1983, and \$44 in July, 1984. What would the price be under the Conservative budget? The price would be a minimum of \$43.50 in July, 1983, and up to a maximum, depending on what happens to world price, of \$58.25. In 1984, while our price would be about \$44, theirs would be between \$55 and \$70. That is what the Conservatives had proposed for this country, and that is what this country rejected during the last election; and this was where we said what the Canadian consumer could expect.

There will not be lower prices. Prices will have to increase; but they will increase on a gradual and predictable basis in order to allow the consumer to adapt better to the changes which are taking place. Therefore, even today, as I indicated, the price of gasoline in this country is cheaper than it would have been under the Conservative budget. I do not have to refer Your Honour to the example of other countries, whether it is the United States or Europe, where the difference between the Canadian price and their price is huge.

The hon. member for Kingston and the Islands, who has disappeared—

**Mr. Baker (Nepean-Carleton):** I rise on a point of order.

**Mr. Lalonde:** Well, the hon. member has disappeared.

**Mr. Baker (Nepean-Carleton):** I do not want to interrupt the minister, but I want to make it clear to the minister that the hon. member for Kingston and the Islands was temporarily summoned from the chamber. That happens from time to time to the minister during debates. She will be back shortly.

**Mr. Lalonde:** I am glad to hear that. I am glad to hear the leader of the House on the Conservative side reassure us in that respect. I listened to her. It was a great pleasure, but I