

vation measure. However, this government is not interested in conserving anything aside from itself.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Wagner: When the ordinary men and women in this country have to pay the price, this does not bother the present government. It never has, and it never will. The oil companies have made their own case now. They indicated that they are not only expected to fuel the country but to fuel the government with extra revenue. While no one in this House need stay up at night, losing sleep over the ability of the oil companies to take care of themselves, we do have a responsibility to concern ourselves with the average consumer and the average taxpayer.

● (1710)

Mr. Speaker, we have long heard rumours of how the pressure of the finance portfolio has been very heavy for the present minister to carry. I would like to spring to the defence of the minister. He has been carrying the pressure remarkably well. He has been carrying it well because he has been passing it on tenfold to the people of Canada. Instead, I am afraid that if there is any epithet that best describes this minister, this budget and this government, it is "cold and insensitive." One can see the cynical advisers in the back rooms telling the minister to be tough this time around because the federal election is several years away. As the hon. member said a few moments ago, it is four years away, so why be tough? God knows how much of the money already taken from the people this government can contrive to give back before the next election.

This government lacks in sensitivity no more than it lacks in judgment and foresight. At a time of unemployment higher than we have had in the past 40 years, we have a government that attacks the industrial heartland of Canada by taking on the premier of the province of Ontario. How proud the Liberal strategists must be of having devised a way of robbing the people of Ontario of 25,000 jobs. How proud they must be of having put an extra burden on the industries and the economies of Quebec and Ontario.

Perhaps they believe they are helping those in opposition in Ontario by trying to make their gloom and doom come true through federal contrivance and subterfuge. This budget will allow the voters in many jurisdictions in this country, specifically the voters in Ontario and Quebec, to understand that there is one Liberal Party, one group of cynics, one group of insensitive and calculating technocrats who are prepared to avoid sacrifice in their own cheap, political interests. Of course, the sacrifice they are always prepared to offer comes out of the pockets of the people. Yesterday, on the heels of the Alberta experience and the Saskatchewan experience, voters in two by-elections in Manitoba elected, with massive majorities, Progressive Conservative candidates.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Wagner: In one case, the leader of the Manitoba Liberal Party saw his own defeat. That is an initial response to the cynicism of the Liberal budget, a response by the voting public. The next response will be in the ballot boxes of Ontario. As the leader of the Liberal

The Budget—Mr. Wagner

opposition in Ontario indicated, this budget has not been helpful to his colleagues. I challenge this government to call the by-election in Restigouche and seek a mandate from a previously Liberal constituency for this economic policy. Let them try to seek a mandate there.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Wagner: They do not have the guts to seek a mandate one year later in a Liberal riding, on account of their mismanagement and manipulation. Less than a year ago the people of this country believed the Liberal message.

An hon. Member: They still do.

Mr. Wagner: It is apparent the hon. member has not been out of this House. They believed that there were no drastic measures needed and that inflation could be wrestled to the floor. It is the consumer that has been wrestled to the floor, and the taxpayer. It is only a matter of time till the pigeons come home to roost. As my colleague, the right hon. member for Prince Albert (Mr. Diefenbaker), has said from time to time, "It is a long road that has no trash cans".

The insensitivity and arrogance of this administration will now be felt by every Canadian, every day of every week of every month of every year until the next federal election, and that cannot be a source of hope for the future.

● (1720)

[Translation]

Mr. Speaker, I say this budget is meaningless. It has no punch except for the unfortunate fact that it penalizes the average Canadian in an unjust and irrational way.

I will say to the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) who complained recently that nowadays people disobey the law more readily, that it is so mostly because his government does not assume the economic and social role that should be its own. The Prime Minister and his government are responsible for the increased danger of dislocation in this country.

As the Chairman of the Economic Council of Canada advocated it, Canada must reinvent its economic and social role, and it is in that context that we deplore in this budget the absence of an underlying policy, philosophy and strategy of economic development. In my opinion, the budget is regressive because instead of stimulating two key sectors of our economy, the automotive industry on the one part and tourism on the other, it hits them head on in a period of the year when they are at peak activity.

The budget is inflationary in that the famous 10 cent a gallon tax on gas in itself and in its repercussions in many areas will fuel inflation which according to the OECD itself is likely to remain up to its current level of 11 to 12 per cent.

This budget is anti-social since the whole of its revenues, its measures to sanction the primacy of private enterprise in this country makes individuals the only scapegoats of the current inflationary spiral. The average Canadian has been given the major responsibility for the overconsumption of oil and for inflation while private