

one should never say never, but that was certainly our party's policy and I recall that, without disclosing caucus secrets, our caucus was unanimous in recommending to the Minister of Finance not to tamper with the indexing of personal income tax exemptions. And that is what happened. Yet, Mr. Speaker, some ultra right wing economists consider that indexing is disastrous for our economy. But we do have a social role to play and that is precisely to ensure that government does not profit from inflation.

We were also blamed earlier for having increased the price of heating oil. It is true that the price of heating oil has increased. But while we are being blamed for that, we are also blamed for not giving enough money to the oil companies. I am totally confused. True, it is early in the morning. But I cannot understand how we can be blamed for increasing the price of heating oil and not increasing it enough to satisfy the oil companies. Contradictions again. I know the situation, Mr. Speaker, because when I was in opposition, during the interlude, I certainly liked to rise and speak quite often. I always liked doing that because you can say almost anything in that situation, you do not have any policy to follow. An hon. member can rise and blame the government for not giving the companies what they wanted. That is fine when the hon. member comes from a producing province.

However, there are some of us who represent areas where there is no oil, areas which are energy poor, and then we can complain and say, "Mr. Speaker, is that normal? What the government is doing is cruel. It is increasing the price of oil. It is increasing the price of gas at the pump." It was great when I was in the opposition, because it is easy to be tempted by such irresponsibility. But that is not what government is all about. Government means having one policy for the whole of the country. I hear one hon. member say, "Taxes are too low", and yet another say, "Taxes are too high". So I say, make up your minds, because what you are doing does not make much sense. Our Minister of Finance was highly criticized tonight. Personally I feel we have a terrific Minister of Finance who is not afraid of expressing his opinions. He is an excellent Minister of Finance, who understands the situation. He is an excellent Minister of Finance who is not afraid to make difficult decisions.

What makes a good racing driver is being able to apply the brakes. Anybody can go fast, can spend. But the only way to see if a Minister of Finance is good is to see what kind of tax measures he introduces to decrease expenditures, ensure social justice throughout the country and make sure that the tax burden is shared equally. I think that our Minister of Finance has fully understood the task at hand. And I for one, Mr. Speaker, am not afraid to support our fiscal and monetary policies. I therefore encourage hon. members opposite to come and ask the governor of the Bank of Canada or the Minister of Finance, next time they appear before the committee, the questions they feel necessary, but not to accuse them of

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refusing to answer questions when they themselves are not at the committee meetings, where they could ask those very questions.

• (0800)

[English]

Mr. David Kilgour (Edmonton-Strathcona): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again I can tell the time. It is 8.04.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Kilgour: Thank you very much, members of the NDP.

Mr. Knowles: It is 8.04 a.m.

Mr. Kilgour: I confess to the hon. member who just concluded his speech and who just joined us before making his speech that I wish I could have done the same thing, having missed the all-night session and just come in in time to make a speech. On the other hand, I think it is important for all of us, and there are many who have been here—something like 26 speakers from this party—to have heard what has been said. I am sure none of us would have wanted to miss the debate. I am sure we all have learned something, and I am sure all members would want to say something about matters they feel strongly about.

The simple theme of my remarks is that the economic policy of the government as disclosed in its budget is economic lunacy. It is not just lunacy but something which is causing a great deal of pain to virtually all Canadians, the young, the old—and above all, the old—the in-between and everybody who has an honest occupation and believes in working for a living. I am sure it causes concern to housewives, public servants, small businessmen and everyone who believes in Canada and puts more into that concept than he or she gets out of it.

I would like to add something first about the inflationary situation which I believe is exacerbated by this budget, directly by the increase in the compulsory payments to UIC amounting to almost \$1 billion per year. I believe this inflationary trend has been contributed to indirectly by the \$3.5 billion increase predicted—and I believe it will be far more than that—in the deficit. I suspect the increase will be somewhere between \$4 billion and \$5 billion next year.

The government will simply monetize that entire debt, or a great chunk of it, which simply means politely that it will print fresh and ever more worthless dollars, hoping that most people out on Sparks Street, in Grande Prairie, La Prairie or anywhere else, will not know that what they are getting from their banks every week is a little more diluted.

Having regard to the budget, I would ask hon. members opposite, which serious commentator has had anything good to say about the budget? I challenge them to give me the name of anyone.

Inflation is the subject I would like to speak about for a few moments as I think it is the real cancer in our economy; it is