

Supply

tell him why. The change that took place in November resulted from the fact that the previous Government, the Government of which the Hon. Member was a part, did not change the petroleum compensation charge. The result was a deficit running at \$140 million a month. The Hon. Member shakes his head. He is displaying his total ignorance when he shakes his head. It was \$140 million a month—

An Hon. Member: How do you know?

Mr. Wilson (Etobicoke Centre): I know, Mr. Speaker, what was going on. I will take the Hon. Member through the figures. The price of gasoline went up because we had to respond to the lack of action by the previous Government because it did not have the guts to change the price of gasoline when it knew it should have. The Liberals knew they were going to face the people in a couple of months and they could not face the music. Instead, the people knew. The people beat them. They beat them and they kept the Liberals out because of all the dissatisfaction that had developed over the years because of lack of governing, lack of understanding and the lack of being straightforward with the Canadian people.

Let me make one other point, Mr. Speaker. The Hon. Member referred in his question to our ignoring the interests of the people who are not well off in this country. Let me remind him that one of the key initiatives in the November statement was the \$400 million spousal allowance that we brought in. The Hon. Member is shaking his head. He does not even know about that. I ask the Hon. Member for Montreal-Saint-Marie (Mr. Malépart) whether he has read the statement of last November. If he had, he would not be saying such stupid things.

Mr. Waddell: Mr. Speaker, I have two short questions. First, there is a deficit in the petroleum compensation account of somewhere between \$1.4 billion and \$1.7 billion. Could the Minister tell me what the figure is? What is happening to that amount? Has it been swallowed into the general deficit or will the Government try to collect it at a future date?

Mr. Wilson (Etobicoke Centre): Mr. Speaker, the Hon. Members' figure is a little high. I believe the most recent figure is \$1.2 billion, which is a large amount. The purpose of this account is to protect consumers across the country from the excessive prices in gasoline.

We have said that we are committed to reducing that deficit, and at this point I would have to say to the Hon. Member for Vancouver-Kingsway (Mr. Waddell) that that is something I will have to deal with in the Budget.

Mr. Waddell: Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister (Mr. Mulroney) is quoted as saying, when asked about the oil Accord, that we have a \$35 billion deficit and we have to start from there. The Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources (Miss Carney) has suggested that the industry got something like \$500 million a year over two years, which is about a billion dollars, in addition to which there is this deficit in the petroleum compensation account. Could the Minister give us a

figure? Would he agree with the Minister's figure that at least a billion dollars has been transferred over the next two years? Would he indicate to the House how he proposes to collect that, or does he propose just to let the deficit increase to correspond with that figure?

Mr. Wilson (Etobicoke Centre): Mr. Speaker, let me point out to the Hon. Member that one of the results of the Accord is that excessive taxes on the industry have been reduced. That is clear and it has been pointed out by a number of people, including himself. Let me also point out that a number of expenses are reduced as well. For example, the petroleum incentive payments will be reduced. There are other things which the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources has reduced in energy expenditures relating to the off-oil program. One cannot isolate one element of a program and say that for this reason the deficit will go up. There are many elements that are taken into account in the broad government finances. That is the purpose of a Budget. I will be setting out how we deal not just with energy matters but with a wide range of matters including the spousal allowance, how we are going to finance it, how we will finance the farm fuel tax rebate, the veterans pension increases and a wide range of other things that I am sure the Hon. Member has applauded as he has watched us over the last few months.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Malépart: Mr. Speaker, I think the Minister's reply had to do with the spouse's allowance for widows and widowers. He did not quite get the gist of my question. I agree on that point. But is the Minister aware of the fact that, by restricting eligibility for this program only to widows and widowers, he is penalizing 80,000 Canadians, mostly women whose needs are the same as those of widows and widowers? Those are the people I was talking about when I suggested he might have invested \$250 million more. The Minister knows full well that he recoups in social assistance any money allotted to the elderly. I was referring to single, separated and divorced people.

[*English*]

Mr. Wilson (Etobicoke Centre): Mr. Speaker, let me point out to the Hon. Member that we cannot rebuild Rome overnight. It takes time to undo the damage that has been done. We have taken the first steps in dealing with the spouse's allowance. There are other people in the country whom we would also like to help, but we have to deal with things as they come. They will not all be done at the same time.

I would ask the Hon. Member to recognize that while we can do certain things on the social side, we also have to generate income to pay for the programs. To generate that income we have chosen the energy industry as the industry which has demonstrated very clearly the capacity for a quick fix, if there is anything close to such a thing. I will just remind the Hon. Member of some of the figures. There is 65 per cent or 70 per cent reinvestment now. That percentage is growing fast and it will create jobs. If the industry can get back to the