

The Budget—Mr. Cardiff

● (1720)

A strong penalty price is imposed on heating oil to make people want to switch away from it, and there are incentives to gas companies to extend their lines so that people can switch. But we have had natural gas for years in parts of my riding, and many small towns have wished the lines would be extended to them. Does the minister really believe that the small towns and farms of my riding, or for that matter, the small towns and farms of his own area in Cape Breton, will be served by gas in the near future? His attitude seems to be, "Let them chop wood", or in the case of his own riding, "Let them dig coal." While the lucky Canadians with gas wake up to warm houses, the unlucky in my riding and his will tumble out of bed shivering all winter to make their coal or wood fire. That seems to be the minister's attitude, for he has made oil prohibitively expensive and has given no tax credit to shield those who cannot get gas.

It would have been far better if the minister had phased in his penalty price for heating oil as and when gas became available, or had revived the Crosbie energy tax credit for those with no access to gas. But the minister has given us a budget that will raise heating oil by 77 cents a gallon by 1983, 16 cents a gallon more than the Crosbie budget, and with no tax relief.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, let me note how this budget has broken the government's promise to all Canadians that oil would rise this year less than \$4 a barrel. The wellhead price of oil has risen by \$3 a barrel this year, but in July the government added 75 cents a barrel at the refinery, and now in this budget another 80 cents a barrel, bringing the total price increase this year to \$4.55 a barrel. That is not only greater than the \$4 the Prime Minister promised to be below, but also greater than the increase announced in the Crosbie budget that the Prime Minister voted against. The Prime Minister's promise was not merely to keep the wellhead increase below \$4 but to keep the total price increase below \$4. My colleague, the hon. member for Perth (Mr. Jarvis), asked the Prime Minister this on May 1, and the Prime Minister repeated the member's question as he answered it. He said:

He wants to know, when we say our price will be less than \$4 a barrel increase, if we will try and make up for that "less" by some other taxes elsewhere. The answer to that is "no".

Well, now the answer is yes, Mr. Speaker. Despite the Prime Minister's repeated commitment, a barrel of oil now costs \$4.55 more than at the end of last year. Gasoline, of course, has risen even more.

To conclude then, Mr. Speaker, this government has broken its promise to Canadians on oil prices, it has made a mockery of the small business development bonds, and it has introduced natural gas incentives that leave many Canadians penalized because they cannot switch to gas and they cannot get an energy tax credit. The Canadian Council on Social Development has said that this budget will have a devastating effect on low-income Canadians. Its executive director said, and I quote:

Essentially they are having the same increase in energy costs, but they are not receiving the benefit of the energy tax rebate which was included in the previous budget, which would have off-set the energy cost by about \$220 per year.

This council speaks from a position that cannot be accused of partisan bias, and it estimates that this budget will increase the cost burden on average Canadian families by \$500 more a year than the Crosbie budget. In rural areas where gas is not available, the costs, I would add, may be even higher.

This is not what we were promised, Mr. Speaker, when this government sought election. It is a sad reminder of the many times in the past when Canadians have been deceived by this government, which seeks power at all costs, through manipulation of public opinion, and now through an undermining of Canada's provinces which stand out against this kind of manipulation.

Mr. Brian Tobin (Humber-Port au Port-St. Barbe): Mr. Speaker, on a passing note before I start, I wonder if the hon. member for Huron-Bruce (Mr. Cardiff) has explained to his farmers about whom he spoke so eloquently during the last few minutes, that a farmer using 6,000 gallons of diesel fuel a year over a four-year period would pay over \$8,000 more for that diesel fuel under the Crosbie budget than he is going to pay under our budget. I wonder if he told his farmers that.

I rise today, not only to speak in support of this budget but to address myself to some of the more basic principles that have become part of this debate. This budget, and the accompanying national energy policy in particular, are much more than a mere accounting exercise or a simple statement of how government intends to raise money and how government intends to spend money. What we have before this House is a revolutionary gutsy plan of action to break the stranglehold that a small number of powerful foreign multinational oil companies have had on the collective throats of the Canadian people for too long.

Oil and gas energy is as fundamental and as basic to our individual existence or collective existence as is oxygen or water. Without an assured and a reasonably priced supply of energy, we as a society, whether it be as a farmer, fisherman in my riding, housewife or businessman, simply cannot function. Simply put, energy is too important a commodity to be placed today solely in the self-serving hands of foreign, powerful multinational oil and gas companies. The people of this country recognize that. They have known it for years. They have grown impatient waiting for the government to act.

In the last election my party promised to Canadianize to a substantial degree our oil and gas industry. We promised the taxpayers that they, through Petro-Canada, would have a substantially bigger share in this country's oil and gas reserves. We are delivering on those promises, not only because we gave our word but because to do anything less during these troubled times, these times of great turmoil in the Middle East, would be an historic and dramatic betrayal of the people of this country. We have it within our power today to be self-sufficient in energy if we plan now to be no longer at the mercy of the oil companies in the Middle East whose only concerns are profits.