

energy costs mean to people. Last week he flippantly remarked, as is his wont, of course, the following:

It seems people are prepared to pay these higher prices . . . You still find some people roaring around in fast cars.

That is what he said and it seems to be the extent of his analysis of the situation. Well, if he thinks that a 63-year-old woman on a spouse's allowance of \$369 a month is roaring around in a fast car and thumbing her nose at high energy prices, then he is more misguided than I believed.

Mr. Wilson: Who drives a fast car around here?

Miss MacDonald: It is the Prime Minister who drives a fast car. But it is the woman who has to exist on a spouse's allowance who is concerned about how she is going to pay her fuel bills. She has had to absorb an increase of \$244 for heating oil since the Prime Minister took office some 15 months ago. Add to that the general cost of living increases that we have seen soar to new heights and you just have to know that this woman is in trouble. She is but one of the many Canadians who would have been eligible for the second measure by which the Conservative party sought to cushion the impact of higher energy costs. She would have been able to claim the energy tax credit we proposed which would have eased her burden by up to \$220 a year. But no, instead she and thousands of other Canadians like her are being left to sink or swim under the Liberal's punitive energy program.

The energy tax credit, sir, was not the only means we had devised to aid Canadian consumers through the difficult transition to self-sufficiency. We took stock of those regions of the country that would be hardest hit, particularly in the Atlantic area. Much of the electricity in the maritime provinces is generated through burning oil. Consequently, higher oil prices would affect that region to a much greater extent than anywhere else in the country. If you look at electricity bills in various parts of the country to compare the cost of home heating fuels, Mr. Speaker, you find that the average residential electricity bill in Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island, including heat, in 1980 was \$296.33 a month. In Cape Breton, where the Minister of Finance comes from, it was \$221.35 a month. Now, in Montreal that same bill would be \$127.40 a month, in Ottawa, \$128.39 a month, and in Calgary \$119.16 a month. So those living in Atlantic Canada have to pay much higher costs for home heating fuel than those elsewhere in the country.

● (1530)

Recognizing the discrepancy, the hon. member for St. John's West (Mr. Crosbie) stated the following in his budget of 1979:

We will be mounting a major effort to ease the burden of adjustment to higher prices in the Atlantic region. We will provide grants to compensate for the additional costs of electricity generation resulting from oil increases in excess of \$2 per barrel per year.

One can find no such grant in the MacEachen budget, although the per barrel oil increases for 1981 have already exceeded the \$2 limit. Indeed, one can find nothing in the

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budget or since to help consumers, except for an ill-fated conversion grant which has taken far too long to put into operation. Even then, there seems to be so many snags and loopholes that it may well cost the consumer even more than he saves.

What about all those people who do not live near the natural gas mains or electrical generators and must rely on only one energy source, oil? Because of the vastness of our country, many communities find themselves in relative isolation when it comes to utility conversion. These people have no relief, no substitute, no choice but to pay the ever increasing oil prices. Even then, the price to consumers would not have to be so high if the government were not determined to make a profit out of these recent tax hikes on petroleum products. This is what the government is out to do—to make a profit.

Let me explain what I mean. In March of this year the government paid out a total of \$148 million to refineries and importers of offshore oil, but it collected revenues in various taxes and charges on sales of oil and gas to the Canadian consumer totalling \$337 million. In other words, the government made a profit of \$189 million in that month off Canadian taxpayers. "That is only one month", the minister has told us; "That is only one month", he blusters. The trend is for a higher take by the federal government, if we look back over the several months preceding it, over and above what it needs for compensation payments on imported oil.

If we look at the first few months at the beginning of this year, we find that in January the government had a deficit in its compensation account of \$124 million; in February it had a surplus of \$67 million; in March it had a surplus of \$189 million. Those surpluses are going to reduce the government's huge deficit. Of course, it is not admitted; it is all done on the sly.

On June 30, the hon. member for Etobicoke Centre (Mr. Wilson) said:

The government is indulging in price gouging. It has claimed that the money from these new taxes is to be used to pay for the cost of subsidizing imported oil, but their own figures show that the petroleum compensation charge and the "special Lalonde levy" are already collecting much more money than is needed. In the first month of this fiscal year, the government collected \$189 million more than needed.

Then the hon. member for Etobicoke Centre went on to ask:

Why doesn't the government admit that they need the money to reduce the deficit and introduce the taxes in the proper manner?

The government can take by illicit means, but it will not even consider giving by fair means. I know the Minister of Finance said that he cannot afford an energy tax credit, given the current deficit. Of course, he can afford \$1.5 billion to buy Petrofina and to send that amount of hard-earned taxpayers' money out of the country. He can afford \$60 million in government advertising to try to brainwash Canadians on what a great job the government is doing. But he cannot afford to provide any relief for those who must heat their homes and run their electrical appliances, even though he is making \$189 million on his energy tax hikes.