

Energy

minister. They certainly acknowledge the problem. They have to live with it. They have no other choice. I wonder what kind of blow it will take to shake the minister and his colleagues out of their complacency. The blow Canadians suffered last week certainly shook them out of any illusion they might have had that the Liberal government cared about their predicament. It was a blow which hit every Canadian and one Canadians could ill afford to absorb, in light of all the other economic burdens this government has forced on them.

I refer, of course, to the increased energy costs which were sprung on us last week by the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources, who has, I am sure, been taking lessons from his colleague, the Minister of Finance, on the cavalier use and abuse of the hard earned incomes of Canadians. The Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources is intent on punishing the Canadian people for his inability and his unwillingness to reach an oil pricing agreement with the producing provinces.

Last Tuesday the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources announced another increase in the price of oil. Canadian consumers will have to shell out nine cents more per gallon for their gas and 8.19 cents more for their heating oil. This was just the latest instalment in a string of increases the Liberal government has implemented since coming to power last year and, by the minister's own admission, this is by no means the last increase.

● (1520)

I have no doubt that the minister will keep that promise, unlike the major promise he and his colleagues made during the election and subsequently broke. That election promise, made over and over again, can best be summed up in two headlines which depict the before and after syndrome of the Liberal party, headlines that say: We will give you this before the election; we will give you that after the election. One headline, sir, is dated January 23 from *The Scotia Sun* and says:

Vote Liberal, and the price will stay down!

The other one is in the *Toronto Star* dated June 5, 1981, and says:

Oil price: It's going to keep climbing—MacEachen.

That is what they said. The first one is what the Minister of Finance said before the election, and the second one was said after the election. That tells the story, sir, the story of deceit, hypocrisy and sham. A two-faced approach.

I know, of course, what the minister and his colleagues probably want to say at this point. They will say: Oh, well, you were going to increase the price of oil, do not forget it.

An hon. Member: That is right.

Miss MacDonald: Well, we have not forgotten. The hon. member and the NDP are right. They, of course, voted along with the Liberals to do away with the kind of proposals we were making. We were going to increase the price of oil but with two major differences, something which the members of the NDP should remember. The first difference, one that goes

to the heart of our democratic system, is that we believe that if we are to have a free government, freely elected, then political parties have a responsibility to the electorate to deal with them openly and honestly. Political parties should not see election campaigns as a time to cheat, manipulate and lie. To do so is to make a mockery of the very meaning of democracy itself. Indeed, to do so is to erode and abuse the trust that must be there between people and their government, a trust which is fundamental to our political system.

The Liberal government, Mr. Speaker, has abused the trust of the voters time and again by saying one thing and doing another, but never so blatantly and dishonestly as with the issue of energy costs. The Progressive Conservative party told the people straightforwardly that there would be higher oil and gas prices in the future. We played fairly. We said the international oil market is unstable, we need more money for exploration and development and we have to organize ourselves now in order to be self-sufficient and secure in the future. However, while we were saying that, Liberal candidates all across the country were saying that they would not raise oil prices, that there was no need for it, even though they knew all along there was no truth to that. Of course, they won votes on it and there are some who would call that kind of campaigning smart politics. Well, sir, I call it just smarmy electioneering. It is that kind of posturing that turns Canadian voters into cynics.

The Minister of Finance obviously finds it easy to live with a lie. It does not seem to bother him that his credibility is shattered. After all, he has his motley crew of backbenchers to cheer him on, these backbenchers who seem no more concerned about high inflation, high interest rates and high energy costs than does the minister. You never hear a word of protest out of them.

The second difference between our proposed energy increases and those that were "unproposed" but nonetheless implemented by the Liberal government is that we did not forget or ignore those Canadians who would be hardest hit by high energy costs. We realized, sir, that many consumers needed time and help in absorbing what inevitably would be higher costs. For one thing, our excise tax was on transportation fuels only, not on home heating fuels as were the government's tax measures of last week. Not everyone drives a car, and as you move down the income scale or into the higher age brackets, you find fewer and fewer people who can afford to own their own means of transportation. They can, however, even then look to other options. However, everyone has to contend with the cold of a Canadian winter; everyone has to have heat. Unlike a car, heating a home is not an option, it is a necessity.

We knew that the inevitable higher heating costs would impose severe financial difficulties on many Canadians, and we tried to alleviate that by exempting home heating fuels from the excise tax. That, we felt, would be one means of easing the burden for the consumer. The Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau), like the Minister of Finance, does not seem to understand, or perhaps he does not care, what these higher