

Adjournment Debate

To delay is to prolong the period of indecision and uncertainty, for which the hon. member's government was well noted, facing these companies. It would result in the creation of unwarranted costs in terms of loss of interest on capital investment and in the postponement of the benefits to be derived from production and marketing. The longer the uncertainty—of which the Tories are past masters—lasts, the more difficult it is to implement sound business decisions.

It is for these major reasons that the government intends to proceed as planned with the retail food scale conversion which is to commence in January, 1982, and be completed by December, 1983. Here again I differ with the hon. member, as we often do, with respect to figures.

Also on April 23, 1981, the hon. member for Peterborough (Mr. Domm) commented on the structure of the food sector of scales conversion. Actually, the correct name is the working group on scales in the retail food industry. Having correctly identified the subject under discussion, I would like to point out that food industry organizations represented in the working group account for more than twice the number of any other group and more than those from all other groups combined.

● (2220)

An hon. Member: No, they do not.

Mrs. Appolloni: There are 33 food industry organizations compared to only 14 scale industry organizations represented on this metric conversion committee, Mr. Speaker.

WESTERN SEPARATISM—CALL FOR REVIEW OF CONSTITUTION
AND ENERGY POLICIES

Mr. Douglas Roche (Edmonton South): Mr. Speaker, on November 21, 1980, I urged the government to modify its Constitution and energy policies so that the flame of separatism in the west can be stamped out quickly before it becomes a roaring prairie fire. Since that time the rigidity of the government in maintaining policies detrimental to the west has been blatant. Without a doubt they are damaging national unity.

The Canada West Foundation poll, released a few days ago, shows a significant rise in western alienation. The poll, taken in March, shows that 36 per cent of westerners agree with the statement:

Western Canadians get so few benefits from being part of Canada that they might as well go it on their own.

When the same question was asked last October, 28 per cent agreed. The increased alienation is most pronounced in Alberta, particularly because of the detrimental effects of the National Energy Program. In Alberta, 49 per cent of those surveyed now agree with the statement compared with 30 per cent last October.

The fact that virtually half of Alberta is inclining toward separatism ought to galvanize the government to action—first of all to stop the policies that are producing this spirit, and

secondly to institute policies clearly aimed at protecting provincial rights in both the Constitution and energy areas. It is true that hard-core separatists in Alberta amount to only 11 per cent, but this figure too is growing. And it would be irresponsible for any federal representative from Alberta to soft-pedal the seriousness of the present situation. Yet the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) in his speech in Winnipeg, June 3, did not seem anxious or concerned. He preferred to talk about medicare and pension benefits to prove the large heartedness of the Liberal government—without going on to admit that that same government's energy policies have driven 139 oil rigs out of Canada, and have cut drilling activity in half. The service sector in Alberta faces a 30 per cent drop in business, and bankruptcies are up 300 per cent over last year. When these figures are set against the backdrop of federal government spending of \$5.5 billion to \$6 billion this year for offshore oil at world prices, the government's policies emerge as some sort of ridiculous joke.

This is a very serious matter, Mr. Speaker. Albertans have forgone some \$30 billion in revenue that could have been obtained had we sold oil at even 75 per cent of world prices to our fellow Canadians. We have done that willingly in the interests of consuming provinces and the need to keep our industries competitive. But when federal intransigence—I call it the "Lalonde follies"—are continued, we must expect a rising sense of anger in the west.

Yet what does the Prime Minister do? After mentioning that the figure of 36 per cent disenchanted respondents is a matter of no concern to him, he states that it could be because he has not been able to get his side of the story across. He blames the Tories and the New Democrats for nursing the western grievances along. He persuades himself that the only reason why the westerners are concerned these days is that they have hardly any Liberals to represent them. That is not the westerners' fault. The reason why the Liberals have so little support in the west is that they have done so little to deserve it.

Westerners feel ignored in national policy matters. The new energy program, for example, has had no policy input from the west. It is seen in the west as a policy that is heavily oriented to the east. On February 25, the Alberta minister of energy and natural resources accused the federal Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources (Mr. Lalonde) of presenting the National Energy Program in the full knowledge that not one of the producing provinces would accept it. But economic policy is one thing. It is the attitude it breeds among the people it affects which I regard as infinitely more dangerous in the long run. When the Alberta Court of Appeal ruled that the federal government cannot tax natural gas from provincially-owned wells, and when the federal government now persists in doing what has been declared illegal and asks me to stand and vote for it, there is a loss of respect for law. There is a feeling of being discriminated against, and there is growing anger in the hearts of the people.