

Energy

member for Edmonton Centre (Mr. Paproski) for having made that mistake.

Dealing with the matter that is before us and not the extraneous matter, Mr. Speaker, at first glance what is surprising about the Tory motion before us is its vagueness. But on reflection this is not surprising. From the start of this parliament the Tories have been content to fall back on generalities in order to criticize the government. Never once have they proposed the alternatives, any more than the hon. member for Don Valley did tonight.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Jamieson: Let me concede that they are under no obligation to do so, of course. But by their actions, or lack of them, they have lost whatever credibility they possessed and their disarray and internal disagreement on every important policy issue becomes more apparent with every passing day.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Jamieson: Nowhere is this more evident than on the matter of energy. Incidentally, I want to thank them for the wording of their motion today, for it has given me the three adjectives most suitable to describe their own posture. On energy policy, the Tories have been incompetent, inconsistent and vacillating—all three.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Jamieson: Their strategy has been as transparent as their policy has been invisible. It is invisible by their own admission. They have said, if news reports are correct, that they are working on a policy but it will not be ready for a month. Yet today, at this very moment, they have brought on this narrowly-worded motion which says in effect, "We are prepared to end this parliament, force the country into a winter election and the resultant inevitable inactivity on important issues," while saying to the Canadian people, "Never mind what we think. Have patience. Ignore our incompetence, our inconsistency and our vacillating, and perhaps in a month or so we will come up with something."

Some hon. Members: Shame!

Mr. Jamieson: Mr. Speaker, we are approaching the Christmas season, but let me tell my friends opposite that their particular version of "Oh come, all ye faithful" is not one that will be swallowed by the Canadian people even in their most generous yuletide mood.

This toothless Tory motion is presented as casually and as blandly as if last week had never happened. I can understand why the Tories would wish that it could be struck from the calendar, but it cannot be done. The official opposition cannot ignore the policy statement of the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) or try to dismiss it in the casual way that so many have. They cannot avoid declaring themselves clearly and unequivocally. Mr. Speaker, they must surely be prepared to speak with a united voice. Let them stand and be counted. Are they in favour of a national petroleum company, or are they not? Are they prepared to say that the big oil corporations should not reap the profit harvest they had no hand in

[Mr. Jamieson.]

making? Do they favour keeping consumer prices down as much as possible this winter or, if they want a freeze, should it be at the expense of profits or of people? Where do they stand on the Mackenzie Valley line and on the creation of a pipeline linkage between east and west? On each of these questions, and dozens more, the Tories are the inconsistent party.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Jamieson: I admire the dexterity of the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Stanfield) who so far has managed to keep one foot in Alberta and the other in Ontario; but he invented a third foot today which he tried to plant in the Atlantic provinces. Either they have come down squarely on both sides of the issue or they have vacillated by the use of what ought to be the party slogan of the Tories—Yes, but. The weather-vale through which they seek to read the winds of public opinion is either out of order or, more correctly, it is being blown hither and yon by conflicting currents within their own caucus; and they know very well what I am talking about.

● (2030)

Let me show you a few examples. On the national petroleum corporation, "A death blow to free enterprise", say some. "A meaningless gesture," say others. On the Prime Minister's policy statement, "A bombshell" is one Tory assessment. "Nothing of great moment" is another. Every man, Mr. Speaker, is entitled to his own opinion, but a national political party collectively that seeks to be credible is not.

This government has a policy. It will bring economic gain to Canada and it is benefiting the consuming public. Certainly there are some hardships and dislocations that all of us regret. But even the government's most severe critics fall short of blaming us for the international developments that lie at the root of much of the present difficulty. The responsible course now must be to minimize the immediate difficulties. This the government is doing to the maximum extent of its powers. Every means possible of ensuring an equitable distribution of supplies is being pursued. Prices are being kept down where possible, and those in greatest need are being helped. If other steps are found to be necessary, they will be taken.

The only time today when the Leader of the Opposition managed to sneak in a five-word policy statement was when he was goaded into it by members opposite: he said, "My policy is one price." What did he mean by "one price"? Presumably, because you cannot have it low in the east, we are going to make it high all over the country. That was the essence of his statement today.

Mr. Stanfield: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker, may I ask the minister a question? Is it the policy of the Minister of Regional Economic Expansion (Mr. Jamieson) to have significantly higher prices for petroleum in the province of Newfoundland, in the maritime provinces and in the slower growth parts of Quebec?

Mr. Cafik: This is not the question period.

Mr. Stanfield: Is that the regional economic expansion policy of my hon. friend?