

Government Orders

[*Translation*]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. DeBlois): I am sorry to interrupt the hon. member but his time has now expired. I must recognize a new speaker. The hon. member for Etobicoke North.

[*English*]

Hon. Roy MacLaren (Etobicoke North): Mr. Speaker, I find it surprising, having listened to the member in his brief intervention, that he is evidently advocating time closure. The arguments he had adduced for supporting time allocation, I had thought, would have led him to quite the opposite conclusion. He also set forth a very good case, indeed, why Petro-Canada should remain a Crown corporation.

Of course, the reasons for Petro-Canada being a Crown corporation—and this is why I rise to speak against time allocation—are fundamental to the Canadian economy. Canadians have seen the role of Petro-Canada in the past decade as a vital aspect of government policy and the ability of the government, on behalf of the people of Canada, to intervene and to have a window on the energy industry that otherwise simply would not exist. Otherwise, the industry would indeed be in the hands of foreign corporations only.

In Canada, we have seen over the years the importance of Crown corporations in our economic development. We have seen the blending of private enterprise and public corporations in a way which has been uniquely Canadian and which has brought major benefits to Canada. It is for that reason that I rise to speak, however briefly given the limited time now available, against this motion of time allocation.

The privatization of Petro-Canada is far too important a subject to be encompassed in the few hours of debate that the government foresees for this very important issue. As I said, Canadians have benefited from the mixed economy that we have known since the days of Confederation. There is no need, today, to turn our backs on those benefits. We have seen those benefits in various industries and we have seen them no less in the petroleum industry.

What was the logic behind Canada's creation of Petro-Canada? As the speaker before me noted, Canada has a vast territory, a small population, immense natural resources, but the only Canadian-controlled element

available to ensure a Canadian presence in the vital petroleum industry was, of course, the national government. The government acted more than 15 years ago to create a national petroleum company and, if we look at the record over that period, we shall see the wisdom of it so doing.

The international price of oil is not set by free market conditions as all of us in the House recognize. OPEC is a near monopoly in setting oil prices. Therefore, the argument that Petro-Canada is somehow unnecessary because free market forces can determine international oil prices is patently untrue.

What the existence of Petro-Canada does give Canada is the opportunity to participate in international pricing and to sense the nature of oil pricing with regard to OPEC's dominant position. PetroCan is a window on the industry which permits Canada to pursue its interest in a way that simply would be impossible if our industry were in the hands of foreign corporations or even of Canadian private investors.

The inability of the market to foresee the nature of long-term supplies is another serious issue that has caused problems for Canada. Again, the presence of Petro-Canada in the international oil markets helps to ensure that Canadians have the opportunity to overcome the problems that arise from uncertain supplies.

• (1530)

What was Petro-Canada's mandate? It was to help ensure energy supplies for Canadians, to assist the government in the formulation and execution of a national energy policy, and to increase Canada's presence in the petroleum industry. The record is clear, to that end, Canada's PetroCan has been active in frontier exploration, in foreign petroleum reserves and in the mediation of state-to-state trading.

I would suggest that the necessity of Canada having such a corporation is even more evident today given the continuing uncertainties of the international petroleum scene and, indeed, following the U.S.-Canada Free Trade Agreement.

Mr. Speaker, I see you are indicating that my time has expired. I want to stress once more that we on this side of the House will vote against time allocation on this important issue.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. DeBlois): It now being 3.31 p.m., the two hours provided for the consideration of