• (2245)

The second part that is offensive about all of this taxation is that the government has no mandate for it. All of us clearly remember the election campaign of 1979-80 when the Liberals strenuously campaigned on the commitment that they would not increase taxes on gasoline by more than 12 cents or 14 cents, and certainly under 18 cents. The Canadian ownership charge increases the tax on that alone by 4.5 cents per gallon of gas, and the total has been something like 60 cents already. I find it repugnant that the government will campaign on one issue and then assume that the elections it has won on that one issue gives it a mandate to lead in any direction that it wants to lead.

The third problem rises out of the question that I placed before the minister. What are the government's intentions with regard to the future of the Canadian ownership tax which is being loaded on to the back of the consumer for a very sterile investment? What is the future of that? The minister has not been clear in the House as to his intentions. Is he planning to continue that tax beyond next fall when Petrofina will be paid for? Will he continue collecting that tax? Can we have an assurance tonight that when Petrofina is paid for, the Canadian taxpayers will not be saddled with a continuation of that particular tax in order to make up a shortfall incurred and caused by deficiencies in other departments, but, rather, that that tax will be taken off so that there can be some relief for the Canadian taxpayer? Does the parliamentary secretary have an answer for my constituents tonight, and all other Canadians who are incensed at the imposition of a tax for which the government had absolutely no mandate?

Mr. Dave Dingwall (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources): Mr. Speaker, it is nice to be able to conclude this evening with a few remarks in answer to the questions raised by the hon. member. The first part of the hon. member's question, relative to the continued collection of the Canadian ownership charge in order to finance new acquisitions once Petrofina has been paid for, is obviously one which cannot be answered at the present time. When initially responding to this question during the question period, the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources (Mr. Lalonde) stated, "The government is not currently considering such policy and it is a matter which will have to be dealt with at the appropriate time".

With reference to the second part of the question as to whether we can afford to Canadianize the oil and gas industry, I think the question ought to be rephrased and should read, "Can we afford not to Canadianize the oil and gas industry?" That is the substantive and, indeed, crucial question.

May I take a moment, Mr. Speaker, to remind the hon. member of the Canadianization goals as defined in the National Energy Program. One of the goals is an increase in the oil and gas sector owned by the Government of Canada. The National Energy Program also says that the Government of Canada intends to acquire several of the large oil and gas firms. To finance a company acquisition, a special charge, which the hon. member has referred to, the Canadian ownership special charge, is levied on all oil and gas consumption in Canada. The proceeds of this charge are placed to the Canadian ownership account, which is a non-budgetary trust account.

I might add that this particular piece of legislation was thoroughly reviewed before the Standing Committee on Energy Legislation, when Members of Parliament from all parties had an opportunity to question the government and the officials as to the intent of that particular account.

The Canadian Ownership Account was designed to ensure that the government's program of increasing public sector ownership would be self-financing. By imposing the Canadian ownership special charge as a means of financing public acquisitions, there is no drain on the general revenue fund. Canadians, the beneficiairies of the acquisition program, will be paying for the acquisitions through a special tax on their oil and gas purchases. The Canadian ownership account has already been used by the Government of Canada to finance the Petrofina acquisition.

I conclude my remarks, Mr. Speaker, by reiterating that the government is not in a position at this time to state very clearly whether or not further acquisitions will be made.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Blaker): The motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted. This House is now adjourned until 11 a.m. tomorrow morning.

At 10.51 p.m. the House adjourned, without question put, pursuant to Standing Order.