

Government Orders

Mr. Pierre H. Vincent (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, many times during the last six years, you have heard me say how pleased I was to speak to a bill. But never was I as happy as today because Bill C-84 recognizes something the Progressive Conservative Party of Canada really believes in, an economic reality for Canada, and that is the privatization of a company.

I think that the opposition distorted the debate at the outset. This debate is not about the privatization of an oil company but rather about the matter of whether or not our government, our country, should own companies which are competing with private companies. This is the first question we must ask ourselves. And I would answer, as the majority of Canadians have done since 1975, by saying: No, the government should not own companies which are unfairly competing with the private sector. A little earlier, I heard the hon. member for London—Middlesex say: Why buy what we have already bought?

• (1810)

Unfortunately, it is true that, when his political party was in office, they paid a fortune, they spent a huge amount of taxpayers' money to purchase some private companies. But Canadians just like you and I, never wanted to buy Petro-Canada, Petro-Fina, Supertest or any of the others, they never accepted that deal and do not own that business. Canadians do not own Petro-Canada and do not feel like they own it. And that is easy to explain. Since 1975, that is for the last fifteen years, if Canadians had thought they owned Petro-Canada, do you know what they would have done during all that time? They would have bought Petro-Canada products. They would never have dealt with another company, they would have gone to their own company, Petro-Canada. And all the other companies, like Gulf, Shell, Esso, and my colleague from Laval—East could name a few others, would have gone bankrupt.

An hon. member: Sergaz.

Mr. Vincent: Sergaz. Nobody would have bought gas at those places if Canadians had had a feeling of belonging, of ownership for a society a government decided to buy without ever consulting them.

Mr. Langlois: At a high price!

Mr. Vincent: At a very high price, as mentioned and rightly so by my colleague from the North Shore, from the beautiful constituency of Manicouagan, as he would say himself. It is not as beautiful as the constituency of Trois-Rivières, but it is not bad. So, the Canadians do not own it and, I will follow up on his argument as to why we should buy what we already own with an example. When my constituents buy secondhand furniture or old jeans at the Army surpluses and I follow his reasoning, they pay a second time for what their government has already bought. The argument expressed by my colleague from London—Middlesex does not hold water. Both parties, the Liberals and the NDP, are in favour of state-ownership. Privatize means to ensure that the Canadian economy, in whatever sector— and again, I want the debate to be on the level of the principles of nationalization or privatization. We could talk about nationalizing hamburger companies, to have a window on the hamburger market in Canada. We could talk about nationalizing the furniture manufacturing companies in order to know what is going on in the furniture industry.

An hon. member: And toothbrushes.

Mr. Vincent: My colleague points out toothbrushes, but we could go into every sector, nationalize everything, but that is not this government's policy. The Conservative government's policy is to let the Canadian economy and Canadian enterprises work, compete so that Canadian consumers get the best value for their money. This is what we want, and I can say that in my riding of Trois-Rivières people are glad to see that over the last six years we managed to sell 18 Crown corporations which were competing with people of my riding, people who invest time and money.

Let's take the example of a Petro-Canada station near a service station where a good worker was investing time and money to pay for it, make it work, create jobs and pay himself a salary to feed his family. What did we have on the other side of the street? We had a brand new Petro-Canada station which was competing with him, with the help of your taxes. This retailer was saying: "Why is the government doing that to me? I did not do anything to the government. Why do I pay taxes to the government—I work hard to earn a salary and send some money to the government—and it turns around and uses