

industry and the oil industry itself, have been trying to draw attention to the shortcomings of this program and the very serious dangers it will have for Canada.

The minister continually contradicted me in answers to questions that I asked in this House. I want to make specific reference to the questions and relate them to the answer he gave me on Wednesday where he clearly reversed himself. He indicated that he knew all along that the caution we were expressing and the dangers we were drawing attention to in the energy program existed, but he continually cast these aside. It was clearly an attempt to force the legislation through before these dangers became readily apparent.

I want to draw specific attention to the contradiction in what he—

Madam Speaker: Order. I am sorry to interrupt the hon. member but I would like a bit of silence in the chamber if that is at all possible. It is very difficult for the Chair to follow the hon. member who has the floor.

Mr. Wilson: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I was saying that the minister had clearly reversed himself. In so doing, I believe he has misled the House. I will show in the references to the answers he gave to me on a number of occasions how he clearly misled the House.

I take to heart the caution that Your Honour stressed to me on Wednesday, that this must not be a dispute between two members, but that we must be looking at a clear change in the direction that the minister has taken, stating one thing on one occasion and something else which is diametrically opposed on another occasion.

● (1210)

I think it is important that he accurately portray his judgment on the impact of the NEP because it is such a far-reaching policy. We are in the middle of deliberations before two committees and I understand there will be further legislation brought in. If we are unable to get an accurate judgment from the minister, it makes it very difficult to judge the merit of the legislation before us. The impact on Canada is tremendous and far-reaching, and will be so for decades ahead.

On Wednesday I asked the minister about the decline in drilling activity announced in *Oilweek*, which he said he has specifically referred to as his main guide on drilling activities, and I pointed out that the latest issue stated there was a drop from 480 wells last year to 467 this year. I subsequently received an edition showing the number has dropped even further.

The minister responded to my question on page 8598 of *Hansard*, March 25, 1981, where he said:

Madam Speaker, the hon. member is confirming that he and his colleagues on the other side are certainly very slow readers if they only discovered in the last few weeks that there would be a decline in the activity of rigs in Canada.

Well, Madam Speaker, we have been trying to get the minister to comment on this expected decline because we have

been calling for one, and it is only now that he acknowledges he knew there would be a decline. He continued:

As a matter of fact the drilling contractors association said, before the budget and the National Energy Program were announced, it was predicting a 30 per cent decline in drilling activity this year due to a surplus of natural gas in this country and an over-building of drilling rigs in Canada in the last three years. This was announced and published by the drilling contractors association quite independently of the National Energy Program in the October 28 budget.

Clearly he is saying to the House he has been aware of this decline for some time and he implies he was aware prior to the October 28 budget embodying the NEP. On January 12, 1981, at page 6079 of *Hansard* in reply to my question he said:

Madam Speaker, supposedly the hon. member is comparing the figures for last year and this. The hon. member knows that quite frequently in winter there are fewer drilling rigs operating than during the rest of the year.

Clearly his information was wrong; drilling activities are higher in the winter, and we drew that fact to his attention. But then he goes on to point out the difference in drilling activity in 1980 and 1981, and draws the very clear conclusion that drilling rig activity is very healthy. He says there has been no decline and implies it will continue to be strong for the balance of this year.

On January 28, at page 6644 of *Hansard*, in answer to a question from my colleague the hon. member for Assiniboia (Mr. Gustafson), he said:

Madam Speaker, the hon. member contends that oil rigs are leaving the country. As of the last count by *Oilweek* magazine, 36 more rigs are in operation—

Then he goes on to say:

So the gloom and doom picture which the hon. member is trying to paint does not seem to be supported by the facts.

Clearly he again implies everything is healthy in the industry.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. The hon. member is obviously debating the question. I have to remind him that not being satisfied with an answer, for whatever reason, does not constitute the basis for a question of privilege. I would ask him to try to come to terms with what he feels is the question of privilege so that I can make my determination.

Mr. Wilson: Madam Speaker, the clear question of privilege that I am trying to develop for you is that the minister has misled the House by his answers in December and January; I have other examples to give you. The question of privilege involves the question whether he was mistaken or had misjudged that information, or he was deliberately misleading the House. That is the question of privilege you must respond to.

I wish to give further examples—

Madam Speaker: Order. I really do not need further examples. If the minister has given the hon. member an incomplete, unsatisfactory, misleading or, for that matter, even a mistaken answer, that is for the minister to live with; it is not for the Chair to determine whether that is so. The Chair cannot make a judgment on the quality of the answer, and what the hon. member is doing now is debating the points on which he disagrees with the minister. That does not constitute a question