

Supply

There was no mention made of service stations. As a matter of fact, the former Energy Minister, Mr. Macdonald, who introduced this corporation, indicated that it was not the intention of Petro-Canada to become involved in the service station business. But what happened? Petro-Canada has over 1,500 service stations. How are we paying for them? An amount of \$5 billion has been expended by this Crown Corporation, and where did it get the money? From the Canadian taxpayer. Every time an individual fills up his or her gas tank at any pump, he or she contributes four cents to a slush fund. We understand that in the next six months or so the bills will be paid for Pacific Petroleum, Atlantic Richfield, Petrofina and the British Petroleum acquisitions. Most of those companies were purchased at inflated prices. But the collection of the four-cent a gallon surtax will continue. The Government will build up a \$3.5 billion slush fund. What for? I suppose to buy up more Crown corporations.

When you look at Petro-Canada over a seven-year period, on the basis of the 1982 financial statement it showed net retained earnings of \$186 million. We have to bear in mind that this company gets its capital free. There is little interest on debt. If Petro-Canada had to function in the normal way in the marketplace and reward its shareholders, conforming to the financial and commercial marketing conditions of the real world, it would probably show a loss in excess of half a billion dollars.

More and more Canadians are realizing that Petro-Canada has not been a good investment. Reserves are not increasing. As a matter of fact, I think oil reserves have remained relatively the same and gas reserves have decreased. What about self-sufficiency? Petro-Canada has really not contributed to Canada's self-sufficiency. This corporation seems to be more interested in self-sufficiency in places like China, Senegal, Jamaica, Pakistan or Tanzania.

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What else is concerning Canadians? It is the slipshod accounting procedures and tactics to which the Auditor General referred. For example, there was the acquisition of Petrofina for \$1.7 billion and the purchase of British Petroleum Canada, which started out at \$347 million and ended up at \$577 million. In his latest report, the Auditor General drew attention to the fact and warned the Government that there was a serious weakness in the manner in which Petro-Canada has been delegated authority to act as the major instrument in implementing the provisions of the National Energy Program. Quoting from page 12 of the Report of the Auditor General, in part it reads:

This means the Government of Canada chose to delegate the implementation of a crucial decision concerning the National Energy Program to an entity that is not fully accountable to Parliament. This constitutes a serious weakness in the management of public funds.

What has been done to check that? We know of nothing. What did the Auditor General say about Petro-Canada? He said:

When the Petro-Canada Act was given second reading in the House of Commons, the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources placed great emphasis on the need for energy development, including risky and costly exploration in the far north, and government-to-government oil deals. However, the company's biggest financial undertaking to date, involving an investment of \$1.7 billion, was in the oil refining and marketing business—Petro-Canada's purchase of Petrofina.

It has become an agency to infiltrate the private sector.

What about the broader context? There is a deep concern shared by all Canadians in the country. In effect, in the section dealing with matters of special importance and interest with respect to Crown corporations, the Auditor General referred to the myriad of Crown corporations as a form of subgovernment. He said:

The citizens of Canada have a right to consider themselves the principal shareholders of these organizations; parliamentarians speak for them. Crown-owned corporations must be held accountable through Parliament.

He went on to say:

These organizations have a greater impact on the economy and the life of Canadians than ever before. There are now more people working for Crown-owned organizations than there are working in government departments and agencies when the RCMP and the Armed Forces are excluded. A subgovernment has been created to fulfil some of the social and economic aims of Government. This subgovernment structure is not as accountable as I believe it should be.

To top it all off, we have his warnings and the warnings of the previous Auditor General. Also we have the admission of the Prime Minister yesterday that things were out of control. Yet Government refuses to change direction.

The country must be relieved of the technocrats and elitists who believe they can make the best decisions for Canadians. They believe that through the centralization of authority and decision-making they can make the ultimate in decisions for Canadians. Essentially this is based upon their maligned and disjointed philosophy. They do this, ignoring the realities of the world marketplace and ignoring the intelligence and the expertise of individual Canadians and individual Canadian businesses.

I find this action contemptuous. The utopian ideal, which may be espoused by my friends across the way and particularly by my friends to the left, that Government can plan and regulate everything to perfection has clearly been discredited; yet that myth prevails here in Ottawa. A country as large and diverse as Canada, with its potential and capacity in human and natural resources, requires the freedom of individuals based upon their intelligence, their instincts and their intuition to make decisions; to share those decisions with other individuals, with other corporations and with other governments; and to encourage risk-taking unfettered by the manipulation and interference of government.

No one person or group of persons can be a substitute for the complexity and variety of decisions which must be made in the day to day operations of the economy and of the stock market and that make the business engine turn. That is what we have in Ottawa today. Basically Canada's economy has become a game, played by the bureaucrats and the theorists, and essentially Canadians are the pawns.