

things we have heard in this long debate, when we know that the industry is over 90 per cent owned by foreign corporations.

The reason for bringing this bill before parliament is not only to increase proven reserves of hydrocarbons and create more activity in the energy sector of our economy, but to have that done by Canadians. Thinking over the many sessions of the Standing Committee on Natural Resources and Public Works, I am reminded of the old saying "Patience is a virtue". It is almost a necessity in this case in order to maintain one's mental equilibrium. In that connection, I should like to congratulate the minister for his patience because he was able to answer the hundreds of questions during the committee study, many of which were asked half a dozen times.

**Mr. Andre:** That's what he did, fend them off; he didn't answer them.

**Mr. Foster:** The fact that he answered those questions so well and handles his portfolio so well is a great tribute to him personally and is also of great advantage to Canada. Members of the official opposition said there was no flexibility in the government with respect to this bill. When looking at the reports of the committee debates, however, we see that many amendments were proposed; some of ours were subsequently withdrawn and some of theirs were accepted. I think this shows a spirit of good parliamentary procedure, recognizing that although the amendments do not change the general thrust of the bill, they further define the capability of the corporation, which of course is what we really want to do.

It is nice to see that we have most of the principal players in the House this afternoon, especially the hon. member for Calgary Centre (Mr. Andre) and the hon. member for Don Valley (Mr. Gillies). I do not see the hon. member for York-Simcoe (Mr. Stevens), however.

**Mr. Paproski:** He is behind the curtains.

**Mr. Foster:** Perhaps, with the resignation of the Leader of the Official Opposition, he has already started on his campaign.

It is clear, Mr. Speaker, that the New Democratic Party recognized the leadership of the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) and the Liberal Party in announcing the plan to establish a national petroleum corporation on December 6, 1973. They supported the bill on second reading and in committee. The Tories seem to be opposed to it, and that will be defined tonight when there is a vote. We have not had a recorded division except on the two or three amendments at report stage, but they seem to be opposed to it even though it has been before the House for a long time. It was before the Canadian people in the general election of July 8 last year, and it seems that the people indicated loud and clear that they were in favour of it.

It is sometimes difficult to be sure where the official opposition stands on the bill. The group that participated in committee seemed to be a combination of westerners and eastern hardliners like the hon. member for York-Simcoe. The hon. member for Don Valley seemed to be one of the more moderate easterners and even seemed embarrassed at times by the length of the filibuster. I suppose if

### *Petro-Canada*

there is some division within the party on this question it will be nothing compared to the division during the next few months as the leadership campaign heats up.

There seems to be a certain schizophrenia on the part of Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition regarding this bill. They seem to be in favour of the federal government investing in Syncrude and the Panarctic exploration. At the hearings they supported the estimates of some \$300 million for the Syncrude investment by the federal government, yet they were opposed to establishing a Crown corporation like Petro-Canada to administer this kind of investment.

In the committee hearings they seemed to say, "If you are going to make an investment in oil and gas exploration and development, do it directly." Of course, that would be administered and controlled by the department and the minister responsible. When it came to the Petro-Canada bill, however, they did not want the government to have any responsibility. They wanted the Petro-Canada corporation to be so far removed from the government that it would have no control over it. Their tones seemed to be a diversity of the two opinions as to how this kind of investment should be made by the government. They certainly did not seem to want a Crown corporation to make the kind of investment we have made in Syncrude and Panarctic with the administrative, technical and managerial ability that this corporation will have. They cannot have it both ways, Mr. Speaker. Either we establish a Crown corporation with this kind of ability, or we go to the other position of direct investment. The opposition's position on this question seems to be schizophrenic.

The bill makes provision not only for exploration and development in hydrocarbons but for their refining and distribution. The minister made it very clear that for the government to have a string of Petro-Canada gas stations across the country is not a priority and this is not what it wants. However, the development of and exploration for further gas and oil supplies is very important. The opposition spent a great deal of time in committee trying to remove from the bill the powers to refine and distribute petroleum products which at some time in the future may be necessary. Certainly, in a national petroleum company we do not want to remove or restrict such powers.

When we look at the petroleum corporations of the provinces, especially the provinces with Tory governments, Ontario and Alberta, it is rather interesting to note that they have the power to distribute and refine petroleum products. It is also interesting to contemplate what kind of national petroleum corporation the official opposition really wants, when they would require the powers of the corporation to be considerably less than those of provincial Crown corporations dealing with energy.

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It seems to me that members of the official opposition see themselves as representatives of Tory provincial governments which they want to keep powers at the provincial level. Or perhaps they are resigned to being perpetually in opposition. I am not privy to their thoughts. Why limit the corporation's present powers? These powers may be necessary in future. If we had limited the corporation's powers, I am not at all confident that we would have been