

Senate mandating the additives that can be used, and those that are not allowed to be used.

Mr. Guy H. Arseneault (Restigouche—Chaleur): Mr. Speaker, I would like to begin by congratulating my colleague and friend, the member for Lambton—Middlesex, for an excellent speech. It was a speech that to a certain degree was very informative, not as partisan as I thought it could be, mind you, of the severity of the legislation that we are discussing and so I have no choice but to make a few comments.

I was very pleased to hear some of the suggestions he made. I would only hope that all hon. members in the House would listen to some of those suggestions, take heed, and even introduce something in the near future that might help us in regard to the new mandate of Petro-Canada, rather than the privatization.

Looking back, it is almost a decade ago that the Tory government had attempted to privatize. You know what happened at that time, Mr. Speaker. It had to back off for a number of reasons. It then proceeded to introduce a different type of strategy. Rather than outright privatization, it decided on a different strategy.

In 1985, it took away from Petro-Canada the tools to do an efficient job here in Canada. It redefined the mandate of Petro-Canada. That has basically declawed Petro-Canada. Now, it is in the process of privatization. So, it has been a long, long plan.

Let us look at that policy of privatization and I know the hon. member talked about the philosophy involved here and giving it the proper tools. The question I have for him has to do with this mandate and the timing of this privatization. Does the hon. member for Lambton—Middlesex not think the timing is terrible and that it is a bad time for the government to become a spectator in this volatile industry? It is a bad time because of the problems being experienced in the Middle East.

He mentioned the mandate and I would ask him to elaborate on the mandate of a new Petro-Canada, rather than the privatization.

Mr. Ferguson: Mr. Speaker, I completely agree with my colleague in that we could not have picked a worse time to start the privatization process. Of course, if the government were to sell now, before the oil prices sky-rocketed, and they will do that if war does break out

Government Orders

in the Middle East, there would be instant profits accruing to whoever makes the purchase.

If oil is a diminishing resource, and we know that for a fact, then whoever buys in will have increased share value similar to what I quoted from the sale of the Polysar Ltd. and Nova Corporation. They almost made four times their investment in a matter of two years. The same thing could happen here. From that aspect alone, we should be taking a hard look to safeguard the investment the Canadian taxpayer already has in this company.

In terms of expanding the mandate, Canada is a very broad and diverse country. We have the ability to produce the ethanol that I spoke of, not only in the Prairies but in eastern Canada as well. That could provide up to at least 10 per cent renewable fuels. It would have to be done in a way that would bring it onstream in a matter of a couple of years.

As I indicated earlier, our conventional oil reserves are going to diminish in the next few years. This would give us the breathing space to bring this on and create the two-fold purpose that I spoke about in my address, that is, lowering automotive emissions by using an environmentally friendly product. I should point out that it has not only been identified as an environmentally friendly product, but the growing of crops to provide the base, the feed stock, or the grain for it would also remove the carbon dioxide from the air.

It is in this context that we should take a long, hard look—a look that entails a lot more than just a few windfall profits the business world will be out there to grab. It should be a long-term look as to what is in the best interest of our economy, our environment, and the people of the nation.

The other benefits that spin off in terms of balance of trade would benefit as well because the products being added to gasoline now in the nation are not manufactured in Canada but rather in nation to the south of us. It also benefits our balance of trade as well as the environment and the diminishing oil reserves, giving them a boost to be longer lasting.

[Translation]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. DeBlois): That puts an end to questions and comments. The Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance has the floor for debate.