

*Taxation*

to unite them. That is very different from the party that I belong to. Within the Liberal Party I see a very large centre with some people who move to the right and with some, like myself, who may move somewhat to the left. However, there is a very strong and coherent centre. That is what is lacking in the party on that side of the House.

During the energy debate over the past several weeks what we have heard is the very far right Reaganomic approach to the entire situation. This not only concerns tax cuts, it concerns, as well, matters such as the National Energy Program where the Conservative Party sounds very much like Mr. Brock, the United States government representative who constantly talks about the American government being very disturbed because we are attempting in various ways to achieve a 50 per cent ownership of our natural resources. He is touring the United States, and recently visited Toronto, condemning us for having the effrontery to try to get control of our major resource industry. He is disturbed that we are trying to achieve the modest goal of bringing that industry under 50 per cent Canadian control. That modest goal which we are striving for is difficult to achieve because there is great power and other factors against us. For example, there is the power of the very large global oil companies, there is the United States government, and the Reagan government in particular, as well as the objections we hear from the opposition. These factors make it very difficult for Canada to get control of those resources.

That is the essence of this entire bill. Through this bill we are trying to get control of our resources and, as a nation, attempt to conserve those resources in order to develop them not only for Canadians of today but for future generations. We have heard much about the evils of the National Energy Program having caused a decline of drilling activity in the west and the fact that many rigs have left for the United States. Hon. members say this is mostly due to the National Energy Program, but they ignore many other factors which come into play.

Between 1980 and 1982 when this government has been in power there has been a net decline of 8 to 10 per cent in the consumption of oil in Canada. That is a very desirable decline. Most of the hon. members opposite were here in 1978-79, but presumably they have very short memories. If hon. members recall the winter of 1978-79, there was an actual decline of 50,000 barrels per day in the production of oil from western reserves. That 50,000 barrels is the actual amount we are purchasing from Mexico today. If hon. members will remember this period, they will recall the deep concern about the fact that we were not going to be able to get through that winter, similar to the circumstances we faced the previous winter. They will also remember that when they were in power they were concerned about getting a contract with the Mexican government to purchase oil. They were unable to get an agreement with the Mexican government because instead of going there as a government, they sent Exxon to do it. The Mexican government was not having anything to do with multinationals, and therefore the Conservative government could not make a deal with that particular country. The ones who made the deal was our own Petro-Canada, the very

company that that government wanted to get rid of. Those are the facts. That is why we were able to make that deal.

We may not need those 50,000 barrels of oil today and we may not be getting that oil from the western reserves, but it is not leaking away. The great myth that we hear from the other side today is that somehow that oil in western Canada will disappear if we do not pump it out and get rid of it as fast as we can. As I said, it is as if there were a hole below the earth's crust which will drain all the oil. That oil will eventually be produced. If we do not use that 50,000 barrels a day from western reserves today, it will be there for future generations. I do not understand the nonsense coming from the hon. members who say that we must get that oil quickly because we need the revenue from it. I suggest that every barrel of oil in the ground today will be worth a lot more to future generations than it is today, and it will be much more meaningful to future generations of Canadians. What is not pumped out now will be of untold value to our children and our great grandchildren. Therefore, I do not deplore the fact that we are not taking that oil out of the ground.

I believe it is an established fact that one of the reasons why there is not as much drilling taking place in western reserves is that there is not that much more oil left in western reserves. Drilling operations have not uncovered a lot of oil in those reserves.

In 1978-79 and during the time of the Conservative government, we were told that the production from the western reserves would decline to about 10 per cent of the production in 1980 by 1990. That is, in the 1990s production would be 10 per cent of the 1980s. I believe that those figures were somewhat pessimistic. Our consumption of oil has declined to such a degree that it makes that prediction impossible. Due to conservation we will receive a few more years of oil production from those reserves. Those western reserves will not be there forever if we pump oil out at the rate we have been doing it in the last 10 or 15 years.

Therefore, I believe that Canadians, after looking at the National Energy Program and the many other factors, including conservation, can say that the decline in consumption by 8 to 10 per cent in the last two years has been beneficial and not detrimental. If the people of Alberta are suffering at this stage, they had better look to their provincial government whose revenues are larger than any other government in history and probably any other government in the free world. If there is hardship in Alberta, Albertans should look to their government which has these large sums of money at its disposal.

I have mentioned this significant decline in consumption which is due partially to conservation and partially to the various incentives that this government, through the National Energy Program, has developed over the last ten years. For example, the CHIP program has spent a lot of money in conversion from oil to gas which has promoted conservation in many ways. I would like to see this continued. One of the effects of conservation is the actual decline in oil consumption.