

In view of the fact that the government has a policy of repatriating the oil industry in the country, what means does it propose to invoke to see that that policy is achieved? What steps is it proposing to take to ensure that this goal of 50 per cent ownership is achieved within the time period involved?

Senator Olson: It will be done by a single incentive or a combination of incentives so that Canadian companies or individuals will be in an advantageous position to do that. That is the simple answer.

Senator Perrault: Hear, hear.

Senator Roblin: I will then ask a simple question: Is it possible for my honourable friend to say whether the instrument he intends to use for this repatriation is Petro-Canada?

Senator Olson: Petro-Canada will be an active player in that, but we also recognize that the other players—that is, the private industry—will also be a major player in the attempt to bring 50 per cent of this asset into Canadian hands during the next ten years.

Senator Roblin: Then I ask my honourable friend what these incentives will be to persuade Canadian players to do it. I want to tell him that I am not asking the question out of idle curiosity, because it means a great deal to the development of our oil industry in this country to know what the position of foreign investors is likely to be, and how that is to be compared with the position of Canadian investors. I am sure my honourable friend will agree that without knowledge of this kind the “self-reliance” in oil, let alone “self-sufficiency,” will be a difficult question. I suggest to my honourable friend that it would be advantageous if the government were to lay this policy before the people in the oil industry as soon as possible.

● (1420)

Senator Olson: The honourable senator can ask the question as many times as he wishes, from many different angles, but the reply that I gave to his first question, that it will be a single incentive or combination of incentives, is still the answer, and the government is not yet ready for public announcement. No matter how the honourable senator wants to twist it around, that will be the answer.

Senator Flynn: For how long?

Senator Roblin: Can my honourable friend give me an estimate of when he thinks he will be able to pull his policy together?

Senator Olson: I could say soon, and we could then have a discussion on the definition of what “soon” means.

Senator Flynn: You are very good at killing time.

Senator Frith: Use the term they used: “In due time.”

Senator Roblin: There is no policy; that’s for sure.

PRICE OF DOMESTIC OIL—FEDERAL-PROVINCIAL NEGOTIATIONS

Hon. C. William Doody: Honourable senators, I have another question for the Leader of the Government. Once again I am in pursuit of the fascination I have for that elusive \$1 billion that is going to be cut from the deficit. Perhaps the government leader could indicate whether it is the government’s intention to ask the producing provinces to accept less than they received under the Clark agreement. Maybe that will account for the \$1 billion.

Hon. Raymond J. Perrault (Leader of the Government): I would appreciate it if the honourable senator would repeat the essence of his question. I was diverted momentarily.

Senator Doody: I will be delighted to do so, in anticipation of an answer. My question is directed to the government leader and is in pursuit of an answer to that fascinating \$1 billion saving that we discussed a little earlier. Perhaps it is the intention of the government to ask the producing provinces to accept less than they agreed to accept under the Clark government. Would that be one of the ways or the way in which the government intends saving that \$1 billion?

Senator Perrault: The Honourable Senator Doody poses an intriguing question. No one ever quite determined what the previous government had offered or what the producing provinces were prepared to accept. It was impossible for that government, apparently, to achieve any signed agreement with the producing provinces. Despite this failure, Senator Doody talks in terms of some shadowy and ephemeral agreement which had been negotiated by the Conservative government. Yet the Canadian people were never informed of the details of that alleged agreement. I suggest that the honourable senator is really in the realm of mythology. May I say, to quote one of the more profound remarks of the Leader of the Opposition when he was on this side of the house, an answer will come “in due time.”

Senator Doody: If I may be so bold as to suggest that many Canadians feel that the time is due, may I also suggest, in the interests of mythology that the government leader expressed so profoundly a few moments ago, that perhaps in a mythical vein he could tell us whether, in view of the mythical agreement, there will be a mythical decrease in the price to the producing provinces?

Senator Perrault: Honourable senators, all I can say is that, in the history of this nation, when governments have been headed by Liberal Prime Ministers, major federal-provincial agreements have been negotiated. Many great historical agreements have been involved, and there is every reason to believe that agreements in the field of energy pricing can be obtained.

Senator Doody: I think we should all rise.

An Hon. Senator: And bow.

Hon. Jacques Flynn (Leader of the Opposition): Since the Leader of the Government mentioned in this debate—because the government leader’s reply has transformed this into a debate—that the agreement would be announced in due course,