

this multinational company or Exxon subsidiary owes the federal government.

When the hon. member for Abitibi (Mr. Laprise) asked how many companies were owing tax money to the federal government and how much they were indeed owing, it can be assumed that this company was certainly among the 2,400 which owe a total of \$298 million to the federal government. And this is one of the reasons why we cannot support this bill.

Unfortunately, oil that had originally been intended for Quebec and the maritime provinces is being diverted by that same multinational. We know that this company redistributes oil to its Canadian parent company through Imperial Oil and that this company diverts crude oil that should normally go to Quebec and the maritime provinces.

Bill C-42 is merely a response to a situation which could be escalating and is intended in the short run to redistribute equitably the black gold of our country. In the long run we will have to find alternatives to this crisis, energetic alternatives especially to counteract soaring oil prices. Since 1973, the costs of oil supplies have kept soaring. At the same time, the profits of multinational oil corporations have increased considerably. Not only do car drivers have to foot the bill for this but so has our whole economy. The spiralling rise of oil prices is partly responsible for the current economic recession. Western countries must pay more and more for this black gold, which does not contribute to their economic recovery.

Mr. Speaker, Canada must consider itself lucky to possess such enormous oil reserves. Our situation is not as serious as that of European countries, but it could certainly be better than it is now. The means of distribution are very complex, especially in eastern Canada where Quebec for instance must import 40 per cent of its oil consumption while the maritime provinces have no access to western Canadian oil, which means that oil supplies to Quebec and especially the Atlantic provinces largely depend on the decisions of multinational corporations, and the recent events have demonstrated that the Canadian government could not do much in this area. Yet the Canadian government has an instrument, namely Petro-Canada or PetroCan, which could get directly from Venezuela the oil delivered to us by Esso. I think it is the government's duty to act as soon as possible through PetroCan.

Mr. Speaker, when introducing this bill the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources specified that it is designed to meet a situation which could become urgent. Even though he admits that Canada has to face a difficult period and has very serious problems, the federal energy minister said at a press conference that there is little likelihood of rationing this year. Mr. Speaker, when I explained earlier why we are against the bill, that is one of the reasons. Last weekend in my riding I heard many people express their disagreement with that legislation. They are very reluctant to a return of the 1939-45 wartime stamps rationing system. They were fed up with that situation then and do not want it in 1979, 1980 or 1985. As the

Energy Supplies

minister says, perhaps not this year but it means that in coming years we will undoubtedly have to go back to rationing which would force us to use coupons to get the basic things people need. We hear nowadays that a car is no longer a necessity; those same people have the right, particularly when we consider our wealth of petroleum products, to use the petroleum without being subject to rationing.

● (1550)

The minister is trying to tell us that there is little risk of rationing for this year. At least that is what he said. However, certain facts contradict what the minister said. Indeed some home heating oil distributors have already been rationed, even before the Iranian oil fields were closed. According to Mr. Raymond Martinbeau, Montreal area president of the Independent Oil Distributors Association, the large refineries in eastern Montreal and St. Romuald that belong to the large multinational oil corporations have rationed the supply of these small distributors by 40 per cent. The problem is not only an economic issue but it also seriously affects people buying oil from those small distributors. At a meeting with the association, Mr. Martinbeau depicted a situation which has been very serious for quite some time when he said, and I quote:

—the shortfall could be here within a week. A little later, users of refined oil for furnaces would then be hit.

Mr. Speaker, when people like Mr. Martinbeau tell us things like that, I agree with one of my colleagues who said yesterday that when this bill is considered in committee we should have the power to question all witnesses to understand the situation in which we find ourselves. I think it would be in the interest of the government to investigate the actions of multinationals which have been rationing the distribution of oil for a while. I am not convinced there is any direct link between that situation and the crisis in Iran.

Mr. Speaker, we should remember the tumult that there would soon be an oil crisis. There still are enormous oil reserves, both in Canada and abroad. I agree that inflation and the geophysical features of some fields sent exploration costs on a spiral. We should however ask ourselves whether the exploration cost increase since 1973 justifies the unreasonable increase in oil prices. Mr. Speaker, the price paid for oil by the public and our industries is much too high in my view, and the enormous profits made by oil multinational corporations make us wonder. The government should not only ensure that there is fair distribution of oil, it should also exercise some control over oil companies that are caught up by the oil fever.

Mr. Speaker, I for one remember the time when we had here some years ago in this House an hon. member who had won the respect of almost every member here. That hon. member for Témiscamingue, as I recall for having read his speeches in *Hansard* and having heard him, warned this same government to take care not to give those multinational corpo-