

## THE SENATE

Wednesday, November 24, 1982

The Senate met at 2 p.m., the Speaker in the Chair.  
Prayers.

### QUESTION PERIOD

[English]

#### ENERGY

##### PETRO-CANADA—PURCHASE OF BP CANADA

**Hon. R. James Balfour:** Honourable senators, I have a question for the Leader of the Government. Does the leader have anything to add to the responses he gave last night to my questions concerning the transaction between Petro-Canada and British Petroleum?

**Hon. H. A. Olson (Leader of the Government):** Honourable senators, I do not have anything of substance to add to the question; but I can advise the honourable senator—

**Hon. Jacques Flynn (Leader of the Opposition):** Not the question; the answer. You do not add substance to a question.

**Senator Olson:** The response to a question, I presume by extrapolation, is the answer, and for that I do not have anything of substance to add. But I can advise Senator Balfour that we have made the necessary inquiries to get the detailed, technical calculations of the matters he has raised.

**Senator Balfour:** I have a supplementary question for the Leader of the Government in the Senate.

**Hon. Jack Marshall:** A technical corollary.

**Senator Balfour:** In the course of his inquiries, would the minister either confirm or deny that the one-cent-per-litre gas tax is to be extended in order to fund the acquisition by Petro-Canada of the assets of British Petroleum?

**Senator Olson:** I believe it is fair to say that the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources announced some time ago that the Canadian ownership tax would not be extended or used for this acquisition by Petro-Canada. I think it might also be helpful if Senator Balfour would care to look at the committee proceedings to which he referred yesterday.

**Senator Flynn:** Why don't you?

**Senator Olson:** I do not think they are available yet.

**Senator Flynn:** Then read about them in the press.

**Senator Olson:** If the honourable senator will look at those proceedings as soon as they are available, he may find a great deal of detailed information that is in line with the questions he has raised. Of course, I can do that research for him and

bring in an answer based on the proceedings, but I am sure that the transcript will be available to Senator Balfour as soon as it is available to me.

**Senator Balfour:** I take it, then, that the minister is giving the Senate an assurance and a confirmation that the one-cent-per-litre tax will not be extended, contrary to reports on the CBC this morning?

**Senator Olson:** This points up the problem I have with confirming, denying, qualifying, modifying, or whatever, reports that my honourable friends opposite hear on the radio or read in the newspapers. What I said was that the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources—and I am subject to correction, though I am pretty sure that what I am about to say is true—said that he did not intend to extend the Canadian ownership tax for the financing of that acquisition of marketing outlets by Petro-Canada.

**Senator Flynn:** But even if we heard about this matter in the press, I am quite sure that it is in the minutes of the proceedings of the committee of the other place that the cost of the acquisition of BP is about \$200 million more than was first indicated. I think that what the Leader of the Government is being asked to do, and he should be able to understand it, is to inquire of the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources as to whether or not he was wrong in his earlier calculations and the cost will be \$200 million more than was initially indicated. That is the question.

**Senator Olson:** There is no doubt in my mind as to what the question is. The doubt seems to be in the minds of the members of the opposition and now, unfortunately, in the mind of the Leader of the Opposition as well.

I gave Senator Balfour a firm undertaking—and I do the same for the Leader of the Opposition now—that I would make those inquiries and bring in a reply as quickly as I could. However, they do not seem to be satisfied that I have given that undertaking. They want me to answer before I receive a response to the inquiries. I do not think it would be prudent for me to do that.

**Senator Flynn:** I agree with you on that, but it would have been quite simple for you to have said, "I have not had time to discuss this matter with the minister." That is all you needed to say, instead of beating around the bush.

**Senator Olson:** The Leader of the Opposition likes to put words in my mouth, but—

**Senator Flynn:** I would like your words to be clearer; that is all.

**Senator Olson:** But if he cares to examine what I have said, I am sure he will see that it amounts to almost exactly the same as he has said just now.