

Government Orders

government has absolutely no concept of what democracy is all about.

The hon. member for Athabasca talked a little bit about history, but I also want to take this opportunity to talk about the bill, because we are being muzzled. Therefore, I am going to use the remainder of my time to talk, not only about closure, but what in fact Petro-Canada means to the country and, in a sense, what this bill is doing.

First, Mr. Speaker, the government would have us believe that this bill will reduce the government's deficit and, by selling off Petro-Canada, the government will have the mechanism or opportunity to raise capital and do those other things.

Believe it or not, selling Petro-Canada would not assist the government's deficit reduction efforts. Canadians already own Petro-Canada, and Ottawa carries the Crown corporation on its books as an asset of about \$4.3 billion. Canadians will not be selling 15 per cent of Petro-Canada. We will be giving it away. Selling an asset means receiving payment in return. How are Canadians going to receive payment in return, or a dime, for Petro-Canada? The government will be giving 15 per cent of it away. The company will keep all the revenues. It is not going to be coming back to Canadians.

Let us look at it hypothetically. If 15 per cent of Petro-Canada is sold at an equivalent value of a \$645 million share offering and all the shares are sold, Petro-Canada will receive \$645 million. The Canadian people will retain, according to this bill, 85 per cent of the company.

Here is where the fancy bookwork comes in. Canadians now own 100 per cent of Petro-Canada valued at \$4.3 billion. If the government privatizes, selling off 15 per cent of the Crown corporation, then Canadians will own 85 per cent of the company valued at \$4.3 billion. How can 85 per cent of a company can be worth \$4.3 billion when 100 per cent of the same company was worth \$4.3 billion before the share offering? The government cannot allow the 15 per cent loss to show up on its books because that would create a loss and increase the deficit. Instead, the government will artificially over-value Petro-Canada's worth to hide the fact that the Tories gave away \$645 million of taxpayers' money.

The Minister of State for Privatization told Canadians: "Both the company and the taxpayer can be better served by allowing the company to raise new equity from investors rather than continuing to rely on the Canadian taxpayer." Well, Mr. Speaker—

[*Translation*]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. DeBlois): I am sorry to interrupt the hon. member, but I must recall the rule of relevance. The debate is on time allocation, not on the substance of the bill. I would therefore appreciate it if the hon. member would keep his speech relevant to the motion before the House.

[*English*]

Mr. Milliken: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I want to defend the right of the hon. member for London East to debate this motion and to refer to the bill.

The motion is to allocate time on this bill. It has been the practice of the House for as long as I have been here, and for many years before, that on a time allocation motion, the merits of the bill can also be raised as relevant to that motion. Clearly, if the bill is a defective bill, the limit of time on it is a serious matter. I submit that with all respect and deference that in fact it is normal on a time allocation motion—

[*Translation*]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. DeBlois): The hon. member's message has been transmitted. The hon. member for London East.

[*English*]

Mr. Fontana: Mr. Speaker, you have seen the light. The hon. member for Athabasca went on to talk about history in Canada, so thank you for accepting that.

As I was saying, when the government and other advocates of privatization ramble on about the need for Crown corporations to raise revenues through share offerings, they are deliberately forgetting to tell the Canadian people that privatization gives away billions of tax dollars to a company no longer operating in the best interests of the taxpayer.

I am sure all members have noticed Petro-Canada's new phrase in its advertisement. I am proud to say that it states: "Committed to Canadians." In fact, that is what Petro-Canada is. It is a Crown corporation committed to Canadians in its present form. When it is privatized, what will its slogan be a year from now? Committed to