

Petro-Canada Act

Canada for the purpose of capitalization, another \$4,900 million of taxpayers' money be given to its board of directors in the form of capitalization. From evidence given in committee it is clear that Petro-Canada needs an infusion of capital. If it is to continue with the mandate granted to it by Parliament it needs something in the order of \$2,000 million as quickly as possible. The projections which the president of the Crown corporation laid before the committee showed that it would need additional capital in the years ahead.

This is a public policy issue which has been before this chamber on several occasions over several years. The question is whether the capital required by Petro-Canada should always come from the pockets of the taxpayers or whether a portion of that capital requirement should be freely given by Canadians who would like to invest in the corporation. I think the nature of that choice is exemplified by this amendment.

Sooner or later independent, elected members of this chamber will have to recognize, when they want to spend \$5,500 million for the purchase of business assets, including service stations, that the taxpayers of the country do not have unlimited amounts of money. If we in this chamber choose to spend money on buying service stations, then we have to give up the opportunity to purchase hospital beds.

I wonder how many of us have consulted our constituents asking them, do you want to pay taxes to your government so that it can buy service stations, or do you want to pay taxes to your government so that it can help senior citizens who are in need? Do you want to pay taxes to your government to buy service stations, or do you want to pay taxes to your government so that it can provide better medical care? Do you want to pay taxes to your government so that it can provide jobs, or would you rather pay taxes to your government so that it can buy service stations?

We are not dealing with a small amount of money here, Mr. Speaker. What the bill seeks is that the taxpayers of the country give the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources (Mr. Lalonde) permission to take \$5,500 million out of their pockets and not spend it on pensions, not spend it on tax cuts, not spend it on job creation, not spend it on hospital beds but instead, give it to the board of directors of Petro-Canada. With this money they can go down the street in Ottawa, in Oshawa, in Toronto or in Halifax and say to someone who owns a service station, "We have lots of taxpayers' dollars, so if you want to sell your service station we will take those taxpayers' dollars and buy it." The next thing is that they will use taxpayers' money to drive the Canadian who owns a service station across the street, out of business.

Petro-Canada has an unlimited amount in its hip pocket because elected Members of Parliament choose to provide the board of directors with that kind of money. In committee we heard testimony to the effect that Petro-Canada is doing just that. This crown corporation, using taxpayers' money, is cutting prices on some corners and driving Canadian-owned service stations out of business. People who have put ten or twenty or thirty years of their lives into a small business

cannot compete with a Crown corporation that has unlimited resources because it has access to the taxpayers' purse.

It is interesting that members of this House have historically voted to create the Crown corporation, Petro-Canada, partly because it was to be a window on the industry and a source of advice to the government of the day. If we were to look at the Order Paper and Notices today, we would find a series of energy bills that have been reported from committee to the House. That committee has worked a lot of hard hours in bringing witnesses before it to hear testimony.

• (1550)

The bill we are looking at today, Mr. Speaker, affects PetroCan in a direct way. The amazing thing about the bill is that the government chose not to amend so much as a single comma in that legislation. If you look at the other bills on the Order Paper you will find the government is moving amendments. I was on the committee and witnesses told us there were things wrong with each piece of legislation, including this bill. But the government is not proposing any amendments to the bill regardless of the testimony of witnesses.

I spoke about a window, Mr. Speaker. If you read the transcripts of the committee hearings, what we have here is a very powerful body of appointed people on the PetroCan board of directors who advise the government on energy policy. A remarkable characteristic of each and every piece of energy legislation before us is that PetroCan will benefit. It will benefit more than the majority of other companies in the energy field. We have a window, Mr. Speaker, but when you stand back and look at how it is used, it should be clear that it is a biased window, one which is distorting Canadian energy policy so that a single corporation called PetroCan can supposedly get bigger and become healthier. Does it matter if that energy policy is hurting all those other companies? Does it really matter to the board of directors of PetroCan that there are several thousand Canadians out of work today because the advice those directors have been giving the government has been followed? Does it matter to them that in towns like Brooks, Alberta, or Kindersley, Saskatchewan, Canadians who have struggled for many years and built themselves a small welding shop and employed two or three people, have gone bankrupt and closed their doors? Is that the responsibility of those appointed people in PetroCan? I suggest to you, Mr. Speaker, that in part it is. But they do not have the responsibility of caring about that. They might as individuals, but it is the elected members of the House of Commons who have the responsibility to examine the impact of this proposed legislation, both direct and indirect.

In the last election, Mr. Speaker, the Liberals and the NDP successfully sold the Canadian people on the view that this party was against the expansion of a company called PetroCan. I think most members of the NDP and the Liberal Party believed that; they certainly said it a lot. Their energy critic, now the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources, certainly told them that. But the reality was that that was a lie. It had nothing to do with reality. In its brief period in government the