

Government Orders

emergency or something. Lo and behold, a few days later, it is here for second reading.

I know that Canadians spent all last summer pleading with the government to recall the House of Commons so that we could debate and discuss issues of significant national importance—I am thinking here of the Persian Gulf crisis and the events at Oka—and we could not get the government to move. And now, within one week, we have the introduction of a bill and second reading. We have not even completed the debate on the motions on Oka and the Gulf. There is something out of balance here and I do not really understand it.

Someone said to me, earlier in the week, that the government was going to run this up the flag-pole just to see how Canadians reacted, just to see if they really wanted to sell Petro-Canada, and that is possible. I do not want to be too cynical, but that may be exactly what is happening. The government simply wants Canadians to register their response and we will see in a few months, depending on how the polls turn out. That is government by poll.

In any event, we have to get on to this debate, but I do want to say that one does not just rush through a disposition of a \$6.8 billion government asset. One may want to, but I do not think one does it. I do not think we want to do it and I do not think the government wants to do it, unless it is trying to hide something or it does not want to tell the whole story.

The second item to which I wanted to make reference is related and very important. That is the movement of the price of oil in world markets. Yesterday, the price moved above \$40 a barrel. It has more than doubled in a two-month period. That is a big hike, a spike as they have started to call it, and it could go a lot higher.

We, on this side of the House, want to know what the government's policy and response is to this radical change in environment in the world energy market. I am not sure that we have a response, but the timing is awfully poor. The same week that this happens, we seem to be rushing through the privatization of our state oil company.

Other governments around the world, over the last few days, have made adjustments. They have got their state oil companies into gear and they have proceeded to analyse the markets. About a week ago, the United States released about five million barrels of its strategic

petroleum reserve. Why? To attempt to stabilize the market.

What is our government doing? There has been no discussion of what our government will do. There appears to be a policy vacuum, based on a premise that we leave energy policy to the marketplace, to the same people who valued our oil at \$20 a barrel two months ago and \$40 a barrel now. That is the foundation of our oil policy. Canadians are concerned about that and if the government does its polling it will see that. It will see how concerned Canadians in eastern Canada are about the price of home heating oil. The government will see how concerned constituents in my own riding of Scarborough—Rouge River are about simply the price of gasoline at the pumps.

Where is the government's policy on pricing for gasoline and home heating oil? Where are the government's policy objectives on security of supply, on competition in the upstream and downstream sectors in the oil business, and on enhancement of exploration and of recovery? We have not heard a lot about this in the last while. The government has been spending too much time planning to sell Petro-Canada.

These are questions that Canadians and my colleagues on this side of the House are asking, and we are not getting an answer.

Let us look at Petro-Canada. The hon. minister indicated that it would not be necessary in this debate to look at the objects of Petro-Canada. The minister wants to sell Petro-Canada. He wants to dispose of it. The government really wants to get rid of it. By saying that, the minister is indicating that he does not care what purpose Petro-Canada had because he and his government do not want anything to do with it.

• (1600)

I am going to refer to those objects. I am going to look over some of the goals that Petro-Canada had when it was founded and incorporated in 1975.

One of the objects was to engage in exploration for the development of hydrocarbons and other types of fuel or energy. Petro-Canada has done that, and it has done it well. It was to engage in research and development projects relating to fuel and energy resources. I do not think Petro-Canada has really executed on that. I would like to point out that Petro-Canada tried around 1980 or 1982, but when the Conservative government came to power, it simply shut down the R and D subsidiary called