

Petro-Canada Act

studies on oil and gas exploration. Finally, Petro-Canada will be able to provide technical assistance and training in the exploration, development and production of oil and gas.

The government is placing considerable emphasis on this new initiative, which, I must say, has been extremely well received by the developing countries and in fact, by all countries, especially at the international conference held in Nairobi last summer under the auspices of the United Nations. The plan to create Petro-Canada International was very well received, and the corporation has already received requests for aid from some forty countries.

Mr. Speaker, this bill, which provides for a number of amendments to the Petro-Canada Act, is therefore extremely important. It specifically provides for a substantial increase in the corporation's capital, to enable Petro-Canada to take on its responsibilities with respect to the oil industry in general, so that the corporation will be able to continue to play the major role it has already been playing in Canada lands exploration and development. It is clear that as a Crown corporation, Petro-Canada does not have the same access to the capital market as a private enterprise, and that the corporation's financing is provided by the Government of Canada, its sole shareholder. The amendments to the Petro-Canada Act, whether they concern an increase in capital shares or the creation of Canertech Inc. which has a mandate to develop new forms of energy and energy conservation in Canada or the Petro-Canada International Assistance Corporation, all of the amendments I have just mentioned are extremely important as far as the implementation of our National Energy Program is concerned.

Indeed I hope that these amendments will win the support of all the parties in this House and that for once, the Progressive Conservative Party will relinquish its instinctive antagonism against Petro-Canada and that all Tories in this House and elsewhere in this country will realize that the vast majority of Canadians are favouring the development of Petro-Canada, supporting the existence of this corporation and condemning the position of systematic criticism which the Progressive Conservatives have taken as concerns this institution. Indeed, the amendments which we are introducing today will give Petro-Canada, and through Petro-Canada, all Canadians, an opportunity to participate even more in the development of oil and hydrocarbon resources in Canada. Once again, I invite all the members of this House to consider these amendments and to support them unanimously.

● (1650)

[*English*]

Mr. Jim Hawkes (Calgary West): Mr. Speaker, I rise in the House today to talk on one of the eight bills which have come out of the bell-ringing which took place for 16 days in the Parliament of Canada. The bell-ringing has already achieved several objectives which I think are in accord with the protection of democracy and, therefore, important. Part of what we achieved through the bell-ringing is a saving of 46 cents a

gallon in the taxing power of the minister. That is not necessarily a democratic principle, but it is a bread-and-butter issue for most Canadians.

As I stand here today, I wonder how many members of this chamber, in particular how many cabinet ministers and backbenchers on the government side, knew that one hour ago in this chamber they were voting on a Ways and Means motion which would impose a tax on gasoline of 52 cents a gallon; 52 cents a gallon from a government that won an election by saying that 18 cents was too much. That is not all the taxes. That is just one tax in that Ways and Means motion.

How many members opposite read the complex 140-page bill and the ways and means that lay behind it? How many understood that the tax was to be 98 cents a gallon? The bells rang for 16 days. Whenever we could we pointed out to Canadians that hidden in that massive, mixed up bill was 98 cents a gallon. All of a sudden the minister backed down from 98 cents and all he wants is 52 cents.

I wonder if the minister in charge of housing understood that. Did he know what he was voting on in this House one hour ago? I suspect he did not. He believed the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources (Mr. Lalonde). One of the difficulties in Canadian public policy today is the mythology that the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources knows what he is talking about. That is a myth. This Minister of Energy Mines and Resources consistently, time after time, day after day in this House of Commons, demonstrates with clarity that he does not understand the industry and does not understand the impact of his national energy policy on Canadian consumers, workers and the fabric of our society.

As I stand in this House today, I have a sense of certain knowledge that we have heard time and again that this government will protect Canadians from the high costs of gasoline and home heating oil, that it has reached a marvellous agreement that will not allow Canadian oil and gasoline prices to rise above 75 per cent of world prices. They say it day after day.

To the south of us is a nation that in public policy said something different. They said their prices would be at world levels. Canada said ours would not go beyond 75 per cent. However, if we get in our cars and drive south across that border, in most parts of the country when we pull up to the gasoline pump or buy home heating oil, the price we pay as consumers is less than the price in Canada today. To prove that to yourself, Mr. Speaker, you need only get in your car and drive south of the border. That is a special kind of magic. We will only pay 75 per cent of world prices, Americans will pay 100 per cent; yet when a consumer buys gas or home heating fuel, he pays less south of the border today than he would pay north of the border.

Then we get to Petro-Canada. The minister says he will strengthen and expand it. He says the Conservative party would have dismantled it. I have never heard the leader of my party or any spokesperson on behalf of my party use the word