

The Hon. Member said there are places in the U.S. where you can get gas cheaper than you can in Canada, and in other places it cost more. Certainly, I am sure if you go to Alaska you will pay a little bit more than you do in Canada. But the average price across the U.S. compared to the average price across Canada is lower by 30 cents a gallon. Some people tell me it is even more than that, but I worked that out myself. I got the statistics and I know it to be true. The Hon. Member indicates there is a lack of competition. You are going to have a lack of competition if you do not allow Canadians to invest in an equitable way in the oil industry so they can get out and compete. It is basically that.

Mr. Skelly: Mr. Speaker, from my perusal of Conservative policy, as inappropriate as it is, and considering the source, I can understand why even the statistics are out of whack. It is difficult to draw conclusions on the price when you look at the eastern states with areas where the price is higher than in Canada. I am not trying to justify that. I am suggesting that the real problem we have here is that we could have better prices in Canada if the Conservative Party did not oppose the introduction of sound competition legislation to protect independent dealers who can compete with the majors who really have a monopoly position.

How can the Member deny the material in the Bertrand report? Did that commission lie to us, did it give us false information? Why is the Hon. Member against competition? Their former leader said that competition was a back burner issue, and that was quoted in a business magazine. What the Hon. Member is saying is different from what the leaders of his Party are saying. They are against competition until one of them stands up and puts on the record that they are in favour of competition legislation. Talk is cheap, Mr. Speaker. Let us get some policy down in front of the public in writing.

Mr. Shields: Mr. Speaker, it is hardly worth responding to that typical NDP doctrinaire rhetoric. They have aligned themselves so closely to the Liberal Party in western Canada that they are known throughout the western provinces as the Liberal Party West. I can remember the energy spokesman for the NDP saying, when the National Energy Program was introduced, that this Canadian ownership charge is a heck of an idea but do not go after just Petrofina, go after the big ones. Let us buy some of those big ones. They did not care how many people they put out of work, Mr. Speaker. The whole philosophy is that money falls from trees. No one is accountable to anyone. We just buy, take over, and we will tell you little people exactly what you should buy and what you should not buy.

The Conservative Party is for free enterprise. My God, that is one of the basic planks of our Party. Free enterprise and competition. All the National Energy Program did was stifle free enterprise and stifle competition. I think I could talk until I was blue in the face, Mr. Speaker, but the Hon. Member would still stand up with his socialist rhetoric that we are going to buy everything, we are going to control everything

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and tell the people exactly what they are going to do. I do not buy it and I am sure the electorate do not buy it either.

Mr. McKenzie: I have a few comments and a question for my colleague from Athabasca. I would like to get it on the record and get it straight that in the Thirtieth Parliament all Parties in the House agreed that there had to be a gradual movement toward world prices for oil. That is on the record and the NDP supported it.

I would also like to point out that the Hon. Member is saying we are against independent petroleum dealers. If he would re-read all our speeches during the debates on the NEP, he would see we pointed out time and time again what a disastrous effect it was going to have on the Canadian oil industry. We were not speaking for the multinationals. It was the Canadian oil industry and all the firms that supply equipment to it that were affected. The National Energy Program cost Canada something like 60,000 jobs, most of them in the Province of Ontario. With incentives under the free enterprise system in the Province of Saskatchewan today and with a Conservative Government, there is an oil boom there. We encourage the free enterprise system and competition.

● (1640)

Does the Hon. Member think that some more Petrofina deals and more nationalization will help employment in Canada?

Mr. Shields: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the question. The Canadian ownership charge is in place and the people in this country and all Members of the House of Commons know that it costs the normal consumer across Canada about \$60 a year. This money is accumulating in the federal coffers in Ottawa at the rate of \$75 million to \$85 million per month. This works out to close to \$1 billion per year. At the present time there is \$1 billion in that fund. It was designed to buy foreign oil companies.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Guilbault): Order. The Hon. Member's time has expired.

Mr. Shields: I have not finished the answer.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Guilbault): This put an end to the question period.

An Hon. Member: What happened to consent?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Guilbault): Is someone asking for unanimous consent? Do I have consent for the Hon. Member to continue his answer?

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

Mr. Shields: Mr. Speaker, market analysis by the leading brokerage firms in Canada and the United States clearly point out that Canada, through Petro-Canada, paid \$300 million to \$500 million more for the company than we would have paid had we bought it on a normal basis. We paid much too much. The people of Canada recognize this and some of the problems