

for Canadians in central and eastern Canada to point to the Heritage Fund and say that that is the answer. That is not fair to Albertans. Loans have been made to other provinces from the Heritage Fund. Those moneys are tied up for a considerable period of time. The Government of Alberta has put a great deal of the Heritage Fund into parks and hospitals, money which it cannot get out. You cannot sell parks and hospitals, but if you could, you would get very little in return. There is very little of the Heritage Fund that you can liquidate and use. It is a non-issue.

We have to look at the situation in Alberta as it is today, not to posture or to find some excuse and blame someone else. We have to look at the problems realistically. We have to take off the blinders and say that this is a concern which must be dealt with realistically and as soon as possible.

The Hon. Member for Crowfoot (Mr. Malone) talks about prior summits and about agricultural meetings. The problem is that the good friends of the Government, the Americans, have again let down the Conservative Government in the case of the wheat farmers. In order to fight the concessions given to farmers in the Common Market the Americans decided to subsidize their wheat growers, which put Canadian wheat growers in a very difficult position. You cannot say, "Those darn Americans are rascals. Look what they have done. Our farmers are really great guys and this should not have happened to them. There is really nothing we can do because it is out of our hands".

If the Conservative Government is conscious about the problems of the farmers as it says it is and puts their problems on the agenda as often as it has, why are other countries kicking sand in our face as never before? It is because the Government does not have any respect internationally. It is perceived that the Conservative Government wants a free trade agreement so badly that the Americans can do anything they want as long as they say that what they are doing will heighten Canada's chances of getting a free trade agreement. A free trade agreement would be nice if we did not have to sell the country to get it. There are a lot of things this country would like and a lot of things Canadians would like, but at what price? That of selling our country, our resources and our culture, of reducing our scope for making decisions on defence, on nuclear armaments, on submarines in the Arctic? We will stop being a sovereign nation if it is carried to the extent that the Americans would like to carry it. I am not being anti-American. The Americans are good neighbours, but the United States is a separate country, as is Canada. We have to have respect for one another. The respect Americans should have for Canada does not exist.

The problems in the energy sector at the present time are not, and I repeat, are not a result of the National Energy Program. When prices were higher, activity returned and reports from all of western Canada, including Alberta, were that there was going to be a boom. There was no talk in 1985 about the National Energy Program dragging down the oil and gas industry in western Canada. There was no talk of that at

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all. But when the price of oil went down to less than \$10 a barrel U.S., all of a sudden the problems were a result of lower world oil prices and the National Energy Program. That is not fair at all. It is not fair to the Liberal Party nor to Albertans. It is not fair to delude oneself that the National Energy Program today is in any way responsible for the problems in Alberta.

The Hon. Member for Crowfoot talks about \$56 billion leaving the Province of Alberta. His Government has been in power during this downturn in world oil prices. How much money has gone back into the Province of Alberta since this Government has been in control? The Government is so apoplectic about the word regulation that it just backed away completely from assisting the energy sector.

Look, for example, at the time sequence when world oil prices declined. They started to decline in January, 1986. Nothing happened. Month after month after month there was talk of doing away with the petroleum gas revenue tax.

Mr. Malone: Who put it on?

Mr. MacLellan: In August, the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources (Mr. Masse), was going to be in Alberta to announce the abolishing of the PGRT. He went out west and spoke about how serious the situation was in the oil and gas industry in Alberta and then proceeded to walk away. Why? Presumably because the Minister of Energy in Alberta said that he might be announcing the abolishing of the PGRT. The next month there was the by-election in Pembina and the Government candidate was not doing too well. All of a sudden there was a retrenching and a scattering of paper and bodies. There were meetings and out went the Minister of Energy to Alberta to announce the abandonment, the abolishing and the doing away with the PGRT. It is a funny sequence of events that that announcement just happened to be a few days before the Pembina by-election.

The situation continues to get worse. Why does it continue to get worse, Mr. Speaker? Not because the situation changed. The situation in September, 1986, in December 1986, in January and March, 1987 is the same. The situation is deteriorating because it has gone on for a longer period of time. The downturn in the sector has continued.

• (1650)

Most of all what has been damaging has been the continuing uncertainty. The oil and gas sector does not know where it stands. It does not know if the Government is going to help. It does not know if oil prices are going to go lower, higher or remain the same. It cannot plan. It is a simple question of economics. When the industry was down you could not expect it to plan large investments. Yet that is not what the Government would have us believe. When it did away with the PGRT the Government said it expected the major oil companies to reinvest that money in the energy sector. The Government is like the guy who lost five dollars on a goal scored in the hockey game and another five dollars on the instant replay. Time and