

*Government Orders*

**Mr. Joe Comuzzi (Thunder Bay—Nipigon):** Mr. Speaker, I compliment my friend on what he has just told us about his experience with respect to energy in Canada. Perhaps I could be allowed to make a comment. I am not so sure I have a question, but this is a period for comments and questions. What we have seen in reply to the statements which the energy minister and I have made today is a vital lesson in how this House operates. On both sides of the House the interests of Canadians are always paramount in our minds. Sometimes differences of opinion arise because we have a different methodology as to how we want to achieve the goal, but the goal is always the interests of Canadians. I compliment my friend, the minister, on his observations.

I have another comment to make. I do not know whether it is because the minister has many years on me, but he gave the history of 1975 when he was in this House, sitting on this side, as the Liberals were putting Petro-Canada into operation. I do not know whether he is that much older than I or whether I am just late in getting to the House. However, I am going to give him the benefit of the doubt and say that I was watching in those years as a citizen interested in government. He is a person who is involved in government. We come from the same age brackets, so I will not prolong that.

When the minister was talking about Petrofina the thought came to my mind that just at that time another government of the day, the Government of Ontario led by Premier Bill Davis, acquired Sun Oil. I am wondering if there was not at that particular period of time the same critique that was given with respect to the Liberal acquisition of Petrofina? Could it not have been applied to the Conservative government of the day in Ontario? Perhaps the minister would like to comment on that, with his wealth of knowledge in the historical energy perspective of this country.

**Mr. Epp:** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is too kind in his words. As I have said before, one of my mentors in this House was a predecessor of his, the hon. Bob Andras. Bob and I were good friends. Obviously his contribution to the country was always something that I looked at, and the manner in which he conducted his responsibilities. He possibly did not get involved in the kind of high level partisanship that from time to time some of us might even decry in this House. If he wants to know the real reason why I had some difficulty criticizing him, it is that he had been in the automobile industry

before and I had been as well. They say that fellows who have been selling cars always have a certain affinity afterwards.

Coming back directly to the hon. member's point, yes, there was similar criticism when the Ontario government of the day bought Sun Oil. In fact, if the hon. member goes back, there was also an investment, for example, into Suncor at that time, in the oil sands in northeastern Alberta. There has been some discussion when the federal government removed itself from OSLO. It did the engineering but said that it would not invest further in OSLO. There was some hope that the provincial Government of Ontario would possibly consider investing in OSLO.

It will be interesting to see whether the present Government of Ontario, which believes in public ownership and which I am sure has a lot of money to spend, might consider investing in OSLO. We will wait to see whether or not it will repeat the days of the Davis government in respect to investments in the oil and gas industry in Alberta.

• (1610 )

The other point I have to make is that Canadians were led to believe at the time Petro-Canada was formed that Petro-Canada would "keep the price of gasoline down". I think there was a sincere feeling among many Canadians that this would be the case.

At the time, we had the Seven Sisters and we have now moved to the Three Brothers. In fact Petro-Canada raised the price. The hon. member made that point. It was two cents to start with and it went to four cents a litre. Whether you bought gasoline at whatever service station you paid four cents a litre more, through all those years, for the acquisitions that Petro-Canada was making at the time. It is false that Petro-Canada lowered prices. Maybe the impression left was not correct, but it increased the prices.

The second point concerns pricing. When one looks at pricing today, I have the mechanisms as the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources, through the Petroleum Monitoring Agency, to do the very things that people thought Petro-Canada should have the ability to do. However, I believe it never had the wherewithal because it was in the marketplace, because it was trying to increase its market share, to be able to exercise that kind of discipline which the PMA is able to do. So, even on that score I do not think Petro-Canada fulfilled or could