

Petroleum and Gas Revenue Tax Act

● (1650)

[English]

Mr. Taylor: Madam Speaker, I am absolutely amazed at some of the comments made by the Hon. Member for Laval-des-Rapides (Mr. Garneau). I take it that he was not in the House—and he should have found this out—when Alberta was shipping oil to eastern Canada, not at the world price but at a low price. The people of Alberta gave up at least \$5 billion in doing that. If we could have charged the world price then we would not have needed any help from anyone else, not the producers or the Government.

If that were not enough, when we exported our oil they slapped on another tax bringing millions of dollars into the federal Treasury. Surely some of that money should now be given back to the people of Alberta who gave up so much—who shared, as the Hon. Marc Lalonde used to say, with other Canadians. How about sharing the other way? The Government of the day took millions of dollars from the sale of our oil, money which it would not have had had we not produced that oil. All we are asking for is a fair deal. We are not asking for anything special, just a fair deal. We are not getting one.

The Hon. Member suggested that the National Energy Program helped Alberta. It ruined Alberta, and it was intended to do so. Hundreds of our workers had to leave the country. With them went our drilling rigs and our expertise. I remember that the Hon. Member for Lethbridge—Foothills (Mr. Thacker) brought in a picture showing rigs lined up trying to get across the border because they could not stand it in Alberta any longer. We drove them out. The Liberal Government, with its National Energy policy, impoverished Alberta. I am simply amazed when I hear the Hon. Member talking about giving the producers a better price. If they had the proper price before and had not been taxed to death by the Liberals, then they would not need any help right now. They would be financially sound.

[Translation]

Mr. Garneau: Madam Speaker, the Hon. Member has understood nothing in what I have said. In fact, the Hon. Member is partly right, but now that these \$5 billion could have been returned to the West thanks to a national energy policy, you have abolished this policy. What instruments does the Government have now to help those producers? None. This particular oil crisis has developed since his Government was elected. Before, I was in the private sector. The Hon. Member says that there were no investments. Yet, Eastern investors rushed to finance the various projects. The big banks were putting up buildings in the West. Everyone was trying to invest.

What I was saying in my speech is exactly what the Hon. Member would have liked to see when we skimmed the cream off the top, because the prices were high, to distribute this wealth throughout the country and set lower prices for consumers.

What I am saying now is that this money should be returned to the West. But how can we do that? With what policy? You have destroyed the national energy policy! The funny thing is that the Conservatives are criticizing the national energy policy and destroying it at the very time when it could have played in their favour. What can I say? We have to be fair, and since we used the policy to benefit Eastern Canada, that is Ontario, Quebec and the Maritimes, when the prices were high, we should have been able to reverse this policy when the prices went down. But now there is nothing. We have to ask the provincial Governments to reduce their royalties. The PGRT has been abolished when it no longer brings in any revenue for the Government, and once more, who will benefit? It will be the multinationals, not the smaller producers.

Mr. St. Julien: Madam Speaker, as my colleague for Laval-des-Rapides (Mr. Garneau) said, perhaps we had well-prepared notes, but mine were personal notes and I was reluctant to them on to the page earlier because they were very poorly written and the Government would not have been able to read them. But anyway, what I intended to say on that subject is, that it is easy to take notes because we have a good Government.

But as suggested earlier by the Hon. Member for Laval-des-Rapides, we will see in a few years from now the results of our Government's efforts as shown by this legislation.

The two questions I would like to raise with him are as follows. He referred to oil. I for one remember that in the East end of Montreal, when Ultramar was closed down despite union efforts to keep the plant open, I very well remember that under the previous Government a few years ago, grants were given to oil consumers. Many people in the East end of Montreal, and I know what I am talking about, because I was attending the College Roussin and I knew that this college had oil heating, converted to electricity. This is what caused those refineries to shut down. Those refineries were closed under the previous Government of course. This all started in 1981, 1982, 1983, 1984, and kept going on.

I would like to ask him this question: Why did the refinery shutdowns start in 1981 in the East end of Montreal?

Here is the second point I would like to raise: when speaking of take-overs, what comes to mind is Petro-Canada first and foremost. And speaking of Petro-Canada, no Member in this House, not even the Member for Laval-des-Rapides can gain access to the previous Cabinet's confidential notes on the purchase of Petro-Canada. We would very much like to know who pocketed the profits, who was involved in the discussions. These are the two points I wanted to raise with him, and on which I would like to have his comments.

Mr. Garneau: Madam Speaker, one has to be really confused to come up with a question such as the one the Hon. Member for Abitibi (Mr. St. Julien) has just asked.