

Government Orders

the history of Petro-Canada. We do not know what chicanery took place among supporters of the Liberal Party who were shareholders of Petrofina and who were engaged in this exercise.

It is not as if Petro-Canada had a clean history among Canadians and in the business field. It might have been conceived in good faith, but it evolved into infamy. That is why I want to look at Petro-Canada, in terms of whether it has performed any function for the people of Canada. They may ask: "What has it done for Canadians?"

If one was to go to a Petro-Canada dealer, one would find that he enters into the same kind of contract with the corporation as any other commercial petroleum dealer does. He is required to buy tires, batteries, and accessories from the company at inflated prices.

I can tell you of a specific case, Mr. Speaker, where a Petro-Canada dealer was forced to buy window washing material at a price higher than it was available for at Zellers. As you know, Zellers makes the boast that it has the lowest prices, but it is a retail outfit. The Petro-Canada dealer could get a lower price at a commercial retail store than he could from Petro-Canada. Why? Because Petro-Canada was profiteering at the expense of its dealers. In that respect it is no different, in its operation and its management, from any other company. Members opposite know that the government, Liberal or Conservative, did not ever interfere in the day-to-day management of the company. It was left to function like any other petroleum corporation.

I assure you that if you go to a Petro-Canada station anywhere in Canada, you will pay the same price that you pay at other stations. You will get the same lack of guarantee, if you get repairs, and you will have the same kinds of arguments. Do not tell me, as a Canadian consumer, that Petro-Canada has done anything for me. It has functioned simply as a commercial corporation. The window that we thought was there is not there. Thus, the *raison d'être* for Petro-Canada has been diminished, if not eliminated altogether.

Let me get on to some of the other rhetoric that we have heard in the House of Commons. There is a great fear of foreign takeovers. Every time the New Democratic Party members get upset about kind of a transac-

tion, they bring in the myth, the bogey, of the foreigners who are going to come in and take over Canada. That makes an interesting point because a business writer for *The Daily News* of Halifax, one John McLeod, has made this point about our friends in the New Democratic Party. In an article today, December 6, 1990 he states, and I quote:

It's instructive to note the difference between New Democratic Party economic policy as espoused by an out-of-power federal leader, and the economic policy of the new NDP government in Ontario.

Let me tell you what has happened in Ontario, Mr. Speaker. Notwithstanding this great fear of foreign takeovers, and notwithstanding "Canada for Canadians", "Let us own all of our corporations", "Let us have restrictions on ownership", and "Let us make ownership available only to Canadians", what happens when the Ontario government under Premier Bob Rae gets its first test? It approves the sale of Consumer's Gas to British Gas, PLC. Why did it approve the sale of a Canadian corporation in the energy field to a foreign corporation? Because it was in the best interests of the people of Ontario, so it said.

All of the ideology that it spoke of in the House in this very debate, that went out of the window because it had to face the practical problem of: What are we going to do? We have a request from a foreign company, British Gas, to take over a Canadian company, Consumer's Gas, so what are we going to do? Are we going to decide it on ideology, like our federal friends do? No. No ideology for us. It is out the window. We are in government now. We have to decide it on the practicalities of the case and the practicalities of the case dictate that the right decision is to approve the sale. That is what Bob Rae did and I do not know what the New Democratic leader is going to say about it when they meet. They had better get together.

I hear they have a television set over there in the lobby to keep on eye on the legislature. The reason they have two television sets is because they know they are saying two different things in the two different places and they are trying to bring them together. The ideology they espouse in this Chamber clashes with the practical facts. It was right and proper to allow British Gas to take over Consumer's Gas. That is the decision the Ontario government made.