

this regard? Has it lowered its royalties on gas to make it more marketable?

Finally, what has happened with the Ontario Energy Board? Has it approved a lower industrial rate to get this gas moving and to create cash flow for companies? If the National Energy Program is so odious, why in 1983 were over 4,000 oil wells—I am not talking about gas wells—drilled and completed in Canada? That is the highest number ever on record. The previous best year was 1980 when there were 2,600 wells drilled. Can he explain that?

● (1210)

Mr. Mazankowski: Mr. Speaker, the Hon. Member has given me an opportunity to make another speech.

Mr. Axworthy: I hope it is better than the first one.

Mr. Mazankowski: I regret I did not get into transportation issues in my speech. I had fully intended to, but I noticed that the Minister removed himself from the Chamber during the time I was speaking.

I did not set out to compare Canada with the United States. However, the Hon. Member gives me that opportunity. There is certainly much more buoyancy, optimism and confidence in the United States than there is in this country with respect to employment prospects. The fact of the matter is that the United States has turned its economy around. Once again it is becoming a very dynamic and vigorous economy. The U.S. does not find itself in the same situation. Its unemployment rate is roughly around 8 per cent and its inflation rate is down. From the standpoint of providing the kind of stability required for future economic growth, the Americans have certainly carved out a pretty good path on the road to recovery. I sense that the policy of this Government is primarily to rely upon the anticipated recovery in the United States. That certainly does not represent economic leadership.

With respect to the deficit, if we compared the size of the two economies and they were on a comparable basis, we should be looking at a deficit in the vicinity of \$18 billion rather than \$31 billion with some prospect of it levelling off. We cannot believe those figures because they have been inaccurate over the last few years.

I am surprised the Hon. Member defends blindly the National Energy Program. He has been very closely involved in the agricultural community. He knows what it means to small family businesses and small family farms. The tragedy of the National Energy Program is that it destroyed that sector of the energy enterprise—the small operator, the small Canadian firm and the small family-operated business. I am not referring to those who became involved in the energy business or the surplus-related business as a result of the boom. I am talking about people who have been involved for some 10 years to 15 years. Their hopes and dreams were frittered away.

The energy policy was formulated to get even with the multinational firms. Foreign-owned oil firms are doing very well, but it is the Canadian ones that are suffering. We have

organizations such as Sulpetro, Dome and Turbo and all the little guys who are in business serving the oil industry. The Hon. Member should go into Red Deer, Lloydminster, or Drayton Valley to see the impact of the National Energy Program. That is where the difficulty arose.

If the Government would acknowledge the fact that it made a mistake, there would be some satisfaction and some move to restore confidence in that sector; but it simply continues arrogantly and stubbornly in the same direction and says, "It is too bad but we were right", and at the same time corrects its mistakes. It is policy by trial and error which has been devastating, damaging and certainly not in the best interests of individual Canadians or of the Canadian economy in general.

Mr. Keeper: Mr. Speaker, I listened carefully to the speech of the Hon. Member for Vegreville (Mr. Mazankowski). He quite rightly condemned the Government's economic policies, but I did not hear him elaborate on what sort of approach the Conservatives would take to the economy. However, I heard him laud and praise American economic policies and their results. Does this mean that a Conservative government, should there ever be one, would follow Reaganite, neo-conservative economic policies which would involve cuts in social services and continued unemployment?

Mr. Mazankowski: It would take me another 20 minutes to outline all the things we would do. Other speakers have done so, but unfortunately I got caught up in the many things that are bad with this administration and the prospect that things will not get any better.

The fact of the matter is that jobs are a number one priority. Certainly the United States has done a much better job than Canada in terms of job creation. We would do that for starters. Then we would be able to restore the dignity and pride of the two million Canadians who are standing on the sidelines and do not have any opportunity.

Unless we generate some new wealth in the country, we will be unable to provide the necessary funding and resources to maintain the social net about which the NDP and the Liberals talk but are not sure who will pay for it. We will restore some confidence in our basic industries—agriculture, mining, forestry and fisheries, but agriculture particularly.

The Government talks about how we should improve our competitive ability in agriculture, but every time a farmer fuels his tractor or combine, 62 cents of the cost goes into federal coffers. Our fuel prices are higher than those in the United States. Certainly that makes it difficult for producers to compete effectively. Those are the kinds of things which have to be remedied.

We have a \$2 billion trade deficit in tourism. Why cannot we do something to reverse that? These are positive things which would stimulate growth and generate new wealth to pay for the programs that are in place. No one is talking about scaling down the social welfare net. However, if we do not generate the wealth we need to sustain those programs, it will have to be one alternative. There is another alternative. A Conservative government would generate the kind of confi-