

Petroleum and Gas Revenue Tax Act

However, I am not asking him to investigate, but to make a decision as a shareholder and to tell Petro-Canada, as a Crown corporation: You are not going to get in on this game, you are not going to follow the movement initiated by Ultramar and increase gas prices in Quebec. We are in a situation where we, as Canadians, have no longer any leverage or say in the area of energy. They abolished everything and now they are bragging . . . Madam Speaker, they have the gall to tell us that by getting rid of the PGRT, they are fulfilling an election issue promise.

Madam Speaker, when the prices for crude oil reached \$27, then \$28, and finally \$30 a barrel in Canadian currency, this brought the Canadian Government over \$1 billion in revenues. The Minister of Finance (Mr. Wilson) said: No, we are not going to cut that. But when the price of a barrel of oil went down, the Minister of Finance realized that he would be losing over \$150 million in revenues and said: We are going to get rid of it and fulfil our election promise. The only reason this Government is acting now is because the revenues are no longer there; since there are not getting anything anymore, they say: We are going to get rid of the PGRT, short for Petroleum and Gas Revenue Tax.

Madam Speaker, this is really laughing at Canadian producers.

I say to this Government: If we want to help Western producers . . . As a consumer from Eastern Canada, I have always maintained, both during and after the election, that the National Energy Policy had a built in adjusting factor. It could work both ways. When the prices were as high as \$40 a barrel, the purpose of the National Energy Policy was to reduce slightly the profit margins of multinationals and offer Canadian consumers more equitable prices. But this factor had to play correctly. Now, the Conservatives have destroyed that mechanism so that it can no longer benefit Western producers. They are getting rid of the PGRT. When it brought in a \$1 billion, they did not touch it; now they say it is going to cost \$150 million. Who will benefit from that? Multinationals will to a great extent. And what is going to happen to small producers, to Canadian producers who took great financial risks? What is going to be done for them? Zilch, or just about! I maintain that if the national energy policy had been allowed to play the role it was supposed to play, today we could have used that policy to provide assistance to producers other than the multinationals or to producers with a daily production of so many barrels, so that at least those Canadian producers who responded to the appeal of the people of this country and the national energy policy, and who took the concept of Canadianization seriously, could be helped today. Now, what did we on this side of the House have to say about that? We must have a national energy policy that can cope fairly and flexibly with rising and falling prices. We cannot expect Western producers to let us take the icing off the cake when prices are high and expect them to take care of themselves when prices drop. What did our party have to say about this? We suggested that the

Government should have an energy policy that would guarantee Western producers—I am not referring to the multinationals but to the other producers who contributed to Canadianization—a minimum price for the period when the price of oil declines. That, I think, would have been fair to Western Canada. It would have been fair to Western producers, and especially to companies that rank as average and small producers.

However, this Government believes that our Canadian economy and the price of our petroleum products should be regulated from Geneva or Bern or the countries where OPEC holds its meetings. This Government has washed its hands of the whole situation. It has eliminated every instrument for intervention, so that Western producers are now at the mercy of decisions made by Arab sheiks or other members of OPEC, and the Canadian Government could not care less. What is particularly outrageous is, that while proposing that these measures should be eliminated, this Government is setting itself up as the saviour of the petroleum and gas industry in this country. Mr. Speaker, in a few years we shall see what the Conservative Government's lack of policies in this area will have done to Canadianization. This Government will be responsible for the fact that many of our Canadian producers will have to sell their oil reserves to the multinationals. It will be the only way to get out of this situation because the multinationals have cornered the refinery and delivery markets, and they stand to make huge profits right there. Sure enough, hardly a few days ago the profits reported by refineries and dealers in this market made headlines in the newspapers. They exact inflated prices from consumers, laugh all the way to the bank, but they simply will not pay Canadian producers a fair price for their products. If we had a Government which would stand up to them and not be afraid to step in when the long-term interest of Canadians is involved, we could have had this kind of measures. I simply cannot understand how western Conservative Members can make speeches such as we have heard when we know that the impact of the national energy policy has been the more encouraging of two trends which the Hon. Member for Abitibi (Mr. St. Julien) described earlier in his reference to a roller coaster ride. When prices went down they sidetracked the train so that we can no longer help these producers. One thing for sure, Madam Speaker, is that when there is nothing, not even a sound program to help the oil industry—especially Canadian producers—get through the doldrums, no-one can object if the Government should hand out a few goodies, which just about sums up this Bill. So how can we really oppose this minimum hand-out! However I must emphasize as strongly as I can that, by doing away with any Canadian energy policy related to the development of an extremely important natural resource which is vital to Canada, in the long run this Government will have done serious harm to the Canadian economy.