

*The Address—Mr. Lalonde*

experience in energy matters, Mr. Bruce Wilson, who indicated in the *Toronto Star*, and I quote:

[English]

It should be apparent to the new government, which now has the responsibility for ensuring the viability of Canada as a nation and for protecting the interests of the citizens as a whole, that the primary objective of the private sector resource-exploiting industries to maximize profits is incompatible with the need to provide assured supplies of energy for the engines of the economy at reasonable prices.

A decision by the federal government to emasculate Petro-Canada, solely on the basis that it was an election promise, does not give one confidence in the quality or objectivity of the new administration. Rather than disposing of Petro-Canada, the government should be developing comprehensive energy policies and plans designed to head off the bleak future now confronting the nation in the energy field. A much stronger, rather than weaker, federal presence is required.

And I say "amen" to that.

[Translation]

And above all we should not believe that, however the emasculation of Petro-Canada might be achieved eventually, no great harm will be done. Indeed, if the government stands by the public statement made in early September, we would be left only with a skeleton firm, emasculated of its most essential functions and whose profits would not allow it to expand, indeed to continue its exploration and development efforts.

The net result of that absurd proposal will be that we will have two Canadian firms of medium size. One will be non-viable, unable to serve the true interests of Canadian society, and every year it will come and bow before the Minister of Finance (Mr. Crosbie) or the President of the Treasury Board (Mr. Stevens) to get the money it will need, while the other firm will be viable and will be owned by a number of shareholders who will of course be more concerned with profits and dividends than with the security of our supplies.

Indeed, even the Conservative government of Ontario rejects the approach adopted by the present Progressive Conservative government in Ottawa. I am referring to the paper entitled "Energy Security for the Eighties: a Policy for Ontario". Here is what the government of Ontario had to say in that regard:

● (1710)

[English]

Petro-Canada supplements the job being done by the private sector and takes appropriate risks where the private sector is reluctant. Petro-Canada provides Canadians with a better insight into the complexity of finding and developing new oil and gas reserves. Petro-Canada can and should, along with the private petroleum industry, play a leadership role in achieving crude oil self-sufficiency for Canada by 1995. This is the conclusion: Ontario urges the federal government not to reprivatize Petro-Canada but to retain essential functions within a national petroleum company.

Premier Davis is not the only premier with that view. It is shared by a lot of other premiers. It is shared by the premier of British Columbia who, on a CBC radio interview on September 16, said quite clearly that in his view it would be wrong for the Government of Canada to try to follow with Petro-Canada the approach that he had followed with British Columbia Resources Investment Corporation. That is the view of the premier of British Columbia himself, and he had very, very

[Mr. Lalonde.]

good reasons which anybody could understand to justify that distinction and that argument.

[Translation]

Mr. Speaker, I have just returned from a tour in western Canada where I met representatives of and spokesmen for the oil industry. I was surprised to see the large number not only of ordinary citizens but also of spokesmen for that industry who say, "Now, listen. Petro-Canada is there. We are accustomed to live with it so why touch it? Let Petro-Canada live and work with us; we can work closely with Petro-Canada which, as a Canadian corporation, has been of much service to us even if at the start we had some doubts about its usefulness."

And this view is shared by a great many citizens. I urge all my colleagues opposite to read their correspondence and they will see to what extent Canadians are preoccupied by the whimsical policy of the present government. They should read the results of a Gallup poll that have been published today, a poll made throughout Canada. Its obvious conclusion is that Canadians are for maintaining Petro-Canada. Seventy five per cent of Canadians want Petro-Canada to continue its operations in the prospecting field. And 57 per cent believe that Petro-Canada should pursue its purchasing activities on the international level, and 54 per cent say that Petro-Canada should be involved in retail sales. Those who think otherwise represent only 7 per cent, 18 per cent and 20 per cent respectively. For a government that pretends to be listening and consulting the people, I must say that I never saw a government as deaf as the one before us.

[English]

This government has at least one member from Imperial Oil, and a national director of the Conservative party from Imperial Oil, and assistants in ministers' offices from Imperial Oil, but I cannot imagine the members on the other side perceiving themselves as being also members for Imperial Oil. This is a view in which they are completely isolated, isolated from the view of the vast majority of the population. I urge this government, if it believes what it has been preaching, to reconsider its approach and its policy and realize that Canada needs Petro-Canada more now than it needed it in 1975 when it was created.

I would like to say a few words about our motion and the amendment put forward by the NDP. I think that our motion yesterday put the situation and our stand quite clearly and quite adequately when we suggested that the address be amended by adding the following words:

—and this House condemns the attempt of the government to undermine Petro-Canada and supports the maintenance and expansion of our national petroleum corporation, as the property of all Canadians, as the largest Canadian-owned corporation in the petroleum industry and as a major instrument of Canadian energy policy.

The NDP in their amendment stated:

—and this House calls in particular for the corporation to be designated as the sole importer of off-shore oil, and for the corporation to open retail outlets to serve the people of Canada from coast to coast.