

*Oral Questions*

that the market is the best way to regulate the markets, not the national energy policy.

**Mr. Steven W. Langdon (Essex—Windsor):** Mr. Speaker, in fact, this decision is very, very good for the producers and very good for the companies which are selling natural gas to the United States. It is not good for the people of Alberta, Saskatchewan or British Columbia, and I think the government should realize that.

The social cost benefit analysis approach, which is an approach used by the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, all sorts of institutions—

**Mr. Speaker:** I would ask the hon. member to put his question.

**Mr. Langdon:** I ask this government to stand up and say to the National Energy Board that this test of the public interest, the social cost benefit test, is something which should be protected, something which is used throughout the world, something which protects not just consumers but producers, too.

[*Translation*]

**Hon. Marcel Masse (Minister of Communications):** Mr. Speaker, we should keep in mind that the social cost benefit test was just one of the many tools used by the NEB to decide whether the proposed exports are in the public interest.

Mr. Speaker, it should be noted as well— I pointed out that our colleague—

[*English*]

—that this policy is in favour of companies. First, this policy is favourable to those who work for those companies. There are more people in Alberta who work in the energy field for companies than there are companies. This is not just for the companies as investors, it is first of all for those who have jobs in the energy field.

**Mr. Steven W. Langdon (Essex—Windsor):** Mr. Speaker, let me make it clear that it is companies that will gain short term profits at the expense of long term jobs.

Is the government prepared to stand up and protect the consumers of Canada right across this country, because this is an approach which will damage consumers, not just now but in the future. Is this government

prepared to stand up and protect the consumers of this country?

• (1130)

[*Translation*]

**Hon. Marcel Masse (Minister of Communications):** Mr. Speaker, I can only repeat that the government is quite confident that the National Energy Board gives due consideration to the market forces as well as to the short-, medium- and long-term interests of Canadians with respect to the environment and the energy supply. These regulations have nothing whatsoever to do with the free trade agreement. First and foremost they apply in a free world where the market is the rule which makes it possible to balance the needs of consumers and producers alike.

[*English*]

**Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Winnipeg South Centre):** Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the same minister. He has just said that this decision had nothing to do with the free trade agreement. We know that it was occasioned or caused by the cases which were being brought by the U.S. companies and that the U.S. government was going to challenge under the FTA. The pressure was on and once again the government caved in.

I want to put this question: Does the government not understand that there is a difference between the interests of Shell and the interests of the public of Canada? Does the government not understand that the responsibility of the National Energy Board is to use powers to protect the long-term security and pricing of a resource that the Canadian taxpayer has been subsidizing for the last 20 years or 30 years?

Why has he given up those powers? What kind of powers is the government now going to give back to the NEB so he can protect Canada again?

[*Translation*]

**Hon. Marcel Masse (Minister of Communications):** Mr. Speaker, I know that for a good many years now the Liberal Party has rejected the notion that Albertans own their natural resources and ought to benefit from them. I know full well that in recent years, within or because of the national energy policy, the Liberal Party has sought to compel Albertans to share their resources with the rest of Canada. However I would suggest that Albertans