

National Energy Program

cents higher per gallon. I have the statistics here if the minister wants to quarrel with those figures. These are figures which are right up to date as of today in May of 1982, compared with the figures of January, 1982, in the document he laid before the House. The situation has changed. The lines are crossing and consumers will be paying more and more because of the program he has announced tonight.

The other point I want to raise concerns the fact that the minister said the Conservatives wanted consumers to pay the full world prices. That is absolute nonsense.

Mr. Ouellet: He said 85 per cent.

Mr. Wilson: He knows that we changed our energy program from what it had been at the time of the last Liberal government. We reduced the relationship to world price by 5 percentage points.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Wilson: That is the difference. We took that first step. If we had not taken that step, I do not believe that this government would have done anything close to what it is doing today.

The fourth point is that it is very important to recognize that in the announcement tonight there are still many "ifs" and there will be many doubts on the part of the industry. There is no assurance that imports will not be decreased to ensure change to the current shut-in of Canadian production, which is costing Canadians money and jobs. There is no assurance that the natural gas pricing formula, only with regard to the gas which has been authorized for sale to the United States market, will be changed to allow that volume of gas to be sold on the market and to save the many Canadian-owned oil and gas companies which are suffering because such a tremendous amount of natural gas is shut in.

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Finally, and this is a key point, there is no assurance that the minister will not again change the rules of the game. There is no assurance that when things improve, as they undoubtedly will in time, he will not change the rules of the game again to the detriment of those people who have invested their hard-earned money in this industry.

Let us make it quite clear, the National Energy Program is a proven disaster. It is a major policy error on the part of that minister. When it was introduced, the energy program was recognized as being a disaster.

The minister showed himself at that time to be totally out of touch with the realities of that industry. He showed no understanding of the impact. He closed his ears. He said he would listen but would not do anything. It has taken him 18 months to do something. He sat in his ivory tower on Booth Street saying he was listening to everybody, but there was no action.

Now the minister has brought in some changes, but they are not the solution. It is too late to bring about the changes that are needed to rebuild that industry to the strong vibrant position it was in two years ago. To say tonight that he is sorry,

to make this public admission that he has been an incompetent, misunderstanding minister, is no substitute for the good judgment that Canadians expect of the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources when bringing in such a major program as this a year and a half ago.

The credibility of the Government of Canada in the eyes of the industry will not be won back by a single announcement. It will only be time, a stable policy and the positive working relationship with the industry that will allow the Government of Canada to regain the trust and confidence of the industry.

We have seen over the past 18 months and will see over the years and months ahead that Canadians will suffer through higher prices which they will be forced to pay for gasoline and heating fuels. They will have higher interest rate levels than would have been the case had we not had this energy policy. Canadians will suffer through job loss because of the lack of activity resulting from the cancellation of two major projects plus the slowdown in activity in the conventional side of the industry.

Does the announcement tonight stabilize the price to the consumer? I say no. I believe we will see an increase in price as a result. Does this provide any help to the consumer, the home owner, the farmer, the small-business man, the fishermen, who are fighting high interest rates and high costs for energy? There is no relief offered. There is no mention of the energy tax credit that we have been calling for in this House for three years.

We should also recognize that the primary objective of the National Energy Program is out the window. Self-sufficiency for the industry by 1990 is totally out the window. Any knowledgeable observer will tell you that. Anybody who has any understanding of the industry does not believe anything that the minister has been saying time and again. Starting in October, 1980, he has been saying that the goal of self-sufficiency of oil supplies in this country is easily attainable and we will attain it. Each time the minister makes these adjustments or changes to the policy, he admits in public to all Canadians that what he was saying before was not true for he did not understand what he was saying. We will not reach oil self-sufficiency by 1990. Surely that is clear to the minister by now.

The only way to achieve the goal of self-sufficiency is if the minister, together with his colleague the Minister of Finance, runs this country so far into the ground that the demand for oil and gas is reduced so greatly that there is not the need for the oil and gas that we hoped we would have with a vibrant, thriving economy. That is the nature of the problem. That is why we are not going to see oil and gas self-sufficiency in this country. The minister can talk all he wants about this goal, but he knows deep in his own black heart that it will not be reached.

The minister has said all along that the policy he brought forward has been recognized as a very positive development in the country and has been so right from the start. During the