

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Crouse: There are times when I hope that I am simply having a bad dream, but unfortunately it is only too true. Most of the problems to which I refer can be directly related to the policies and the programs which have been enunciated by this government, their action or inaction. Yet little or no mention of these awful problems appear in any of the government's projections. Even the government's financial-economic forecasts ignore the huge blank cheque demands being made as though this would never be used. But I fear that the \$14 billion being requested here today in Bill C-59 is only the tip of the iceberg. A further blank cheque could be demanded later by a budget provision giving the government the power to impose, whenever it chooses, a Canadian ownership special charge on all oil and gas consumption in this country. It has been estimated that this charge could generate total revenues of up to \$3.5 billion a year. If, as the government suggests, this cash flow is to be used as a means of obtaining investment capital then it would be sufficient to finance the debt charges on a borrowing of possibly \$30 billion, or more. Moreover, if such a loan is used in the way this government plans, additional cash flow would become available to enable the government to compound its borrowing capacity. In total, then, as I see it under this system, the government could get its hands on something in the order of \$50 billion or more. It has already had \$12 billion last year, and it will have \$14 billion when this bill is passed. That is, \$26 billion, and we have only just started.

To obtain this enormous amount of capital all the government needs to do is issue a proclamation that the special charge is coming into effect. Of course, the economic consequences would be enormous, rendering the latest government forecasts essentially obsolete, but then, of course, they already are obsolete when related to the October budget. The ability of the federal government to acquire this massive amount of money is stated explicitly in the budget and in the enabling legislation. Yet none of the new legislative proposals, including Bill C-59, say one word about how the money must be used and, as indicated, their inevitable economic and revenue impact is ignored in the government's forecasts. This government, as far as I can see, is giving itself a completely free hand to spend not only the \$12 billion, plus today's \$14 billion, but some \$50 billion as it sees fit, without any specific statutory restraints. In fairness to the Minister of Finance, when bringing down his budget he did devote one brief paragraph to this subject. He stated:

Petro-Canada will be charged initially with the task of acquiring the Canadian operations of one or more multinational oil companies. As in the past, the financing for such acquisitions will be obtained in large part by borrowing in foreign capital markets. But additional infusions of equity capital may be required. To provide that capital the government will establish a Canadian ownership account. Revenue for the account will be provided by a Canadian ownership charge . . .

Borrowing Authority

That is the end of the quotation, Mr. Speaker. In addition to giving itself the right to impose an additional burden of up to \$2,000 on every man, woman and child in Canada, the government has issued notice to the major foreign-controlled oil companies that their days in this country are numbered. In my opinion this take-over plan amounts to the most ambitious program of nationalist-inspired socialistic state intervention in the economy attempted by any government in Canada's history, and I have looked back over the pages for quite a number of years with respect to this issue.

Government officials deny that the plan constitutes expropriation of the petroleum industry, since the Prime Minister does not like these unpleasant words. However, the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources (Mr. Lalonde), in other budget documentation, provides this information:

The ownership and control targets for large firms and public sector participation are voluntary. It would be preferable to meet the ownership targets by guidelines and flexibility, rather than through legislation. The government will, however, carefully review developments, to see whether satisfactory progress is being made under these voluntary ground rules.

When you analyse that statement, Mr. Speaker, the message is quite clear, namely, "Surrender or we will expropriate." Already Petrofina has been acquired at a cost of something in the order \$1.46 billion. In light of what has been said by the Minister of Finance and by the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources the question one must pose is: Who will be next? That is something we could sell lottery tickets on. It could be the new guessing game in Canada: Will it be Gulf Oil, will it be Texaco; will it be Imperial Oil; who will be next? There is no need to worry, if you guess one of the other companies and buy some stock in it that you will not be well paid for your efforts by the government. The government, backed up by its taxing and borrowing powers, will certainly make you a profit if the company you select is taken over by this government. Look what they handed to the owners of Petrofina by way of a profit in excess of market value. Given the amount of capital this government's blank cheque will permit it to raise for this purpose, no multinational oil company can rely on escaping the government's take-overs.

In my opinion, this type of massive expropriation program raises all kinds of policy questions: Venezuela, Cuba and Brazil, to name but a few, all followed the take-over role with disastrous consequences for their countries' economies. Canadians, of course, have been led to believe that their governmental system is somewhat different to that in those countries. But now, in light of what is happening today, many Canadians are simply not so sure. We must ask ourselves: Do we really want the Prime Minister to be the head of Petrofina, Imperial Oil, Gulf Oil or Texaco? Do we really want him to delegate the position to one or more of the top mandarins in Ottawa who have so mismanaged the government's finances that last year the deficit exceeded \$14 billion, and next year it is predicted to exceed something in the order of \$14 billion but which now appears to be headed for \$16 billion or more? With men like that minding the store we must ask ourselves what will really happen to Canada's economy.