

Government Orders

Obviously privatization is not the answer and therefore Crown corporations were not the problem. On Petro-Canada as with a number of other federal Crown corporations, the government must be prepared to admit its mistake. Petro-Canada like Air Canada and the post office ought to be public service corporations carrying out some sort of defined social, political or economic goal that our society requires that is not being looked after and will not be looked after by private enterprise.

Petro-Canada, like Air Canada, the post office and others must be open, responsible and responsive. Like governments they must be accountable. A Crown corporation represents a taxpayer's investment in his or her own future. That future could be a job, an income, a quality of life or a safe and secure environment.

Petro-Canada has an important role to play in this country's future. We cannot afford to give up our investment just to satisfy the ideological dreams of the Conservative Party and their big business friends.

Mr. Ken James (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Labour and Minister of State (Transport)): Mr. Speaker, I listened intently to the hon. member for The Battlefords—Meadow Lake being fairly demeaning to private enterprise and what it does in the marketplace.

I thought it might be interesting to him if I read from *The Economist* magazine which says:

Mr. John Moore, the Treasury minister",—

This was in the U.K.

— in charge of privatization, argues that past experience has surely taught us that, from the customer's point of view, the state is just as likely to abuse a monopoly position as a private owner.

The article goes on to say:

He ought to know, The British Treasury has almost routinely forced the gas, electricity and water industries to charge their consumers more than the industries' chairmen thought either necessary or justified.

Listen, that is not private enterprise. They are examples of where public ownership is doing consumers in. Let us not be so demeaning to private enterprise. There is real reason to know and we can look around in Canada.

I have a question for the hon. member as to who said the following: "There are some sectors and some situa-

tions where the government buyouts make sense, but there are other sectors of the economy where such direct public ownership would be profoundly counterproductive; a huge investment of public dollars for little return. If our interest in democracy is to increase participation by workers and the public generally in the life of the company and the economy, then making the government the only shareholder isn't really the answer."

I do not think the member knows who said that, so I would like to tell him. It was Mr. Bob Rae, premier of Ontario.

Mr. Taylor: Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his question. I did not know the answer to the member's question, but I was thinking as I was listening to the quote that any good New Democrat would probably say that. As a result, I am very happy to hear that it is the new premier of Ontario who is credited with such good words by the member opposite.

There is also another person whom I would like to quote briefly. It was a note that I took in reading from Walter Stewart's 1987 book, in which Mr. Stewart talks about Crown corporations. He describes the worst situation that affects a Crown corporation: first, a corporation funded in part by the taxpayer but not responsible to Parliament; second, a corporation without social or political responsibility; and, third, an entity with neither heart nor head in proper working order".

Mr. Stewart was talking about Crown corporations in general, but he could be talking about the type of management that a private sector government would apply to either a post office or an airline company or, in this case, an energy company.

Petro-Canada, Air Canada and the post office, such corporations serving the interests of Canadian people must be accountable at all times. Only through Parliament can they be accountable to the people of this country.

A private company operating Petro-Canada can make all the mistakes in the world and the Canadian people have no recourse to correct them, but the government managing the sector through the Crown corporation must be held accountable every two, three, four and, heaven forbid, five years by the people of this country in general elections when they think about the management abilities of whatever government is serving them. I