

consumer. In addition, in the last year the Government has given over \$1 billion to bail out two banks in the country.

How is the Government going to replace these revenues? It is going to replace them with the earnings of the people of Canada. At the same time as the Government is partially deindexing family allowances and exorbitantly taxing gasoline, again taking from those who need help the most and who can least afford to bear this tax, it is giving to the largest corporations in the country. Therefore, not only are people being taxed more, but they are not getting the benefits of this taxation. It is going to companies which, for the most part, are owned outside of Canada. In the case of the banks, the largest amounts were owed to groups, individuals, and corporations outside of Canada, not to mention the corporations in Canada which could afford to bear the cost of these losses more easily than could individuals in the country.

As well, the Government is reducing the number of civil servants. It is telling the Canadian people that the reason we have such a high deficit is that the Public Service has not been doing its job. The Government says there are too many civil servants and that they are lazy. The Government is using the public servants, former Governments, and the people of Canada as a scapegoat for its activities and poor policies. It is one thing to act in this way and another to use innocent parties who have laboured hard in good faith in the country as a scapegoat.

Mr. Gauthier: Mr. Speaker, I remember hearing the Member ask the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources (Miss Carney) a question last week about the fact that Petro-Canada was increasing the price of gasoline, in other words, moving with the pack of multinational companies in moving up the price of gasoline. If I may paraphrase, the Member asked the Minister why Petro-Canada, which was supposed to be our window on the industry and was supposed to have been established to ensure fair and equitable prices on the market, was following the pack like sheep. He asked, secondly, whether it was the policy of the Government to increase the profit picture of Petro-Canada so that it could be sold to the general public. Over the weekend we heard the Minister state on TV that that was her policy. Could the Member give us his views on Petro-Canada and on how he feels about the promise of the Minister to privatize it?

Mr. MacLellan: Mr. Speaker, as I have said before, I think this is one of the most insidious features of the Government's policy with respect to oil and gas. The Minister stated on television last evening that it is her design to privatize Petro-Canada. When I asked her last week why Petro-Canada was leading price increases and why, during the last three months, Petro-Canada increased the price of gasoline on two occasions, she said that she had no idea and did not know of these price increases. I have grave doubts about the response of the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources in this regard. I think it is becoming increasingly clear why the Government is allowing Petro-Canada to increase its gasoline prices.

Petroleum and Gas Revenue Tax Act

The irony is that it is beautiful for the multinational oil companies to have Petro-Canada leading the price increases because when Petro-Canada increases its prices the other companies come right in behind and increase their prices by the same amount. What can the Government do to prohibit this when its own Crown corporation is leading the way? The multinationals get a free ride. They can increase their prices without the Government being able to say anything to them.

Where is the report of the Restrictive Trade Practices Commission, which has been repeatedly postponed, which the consumers of the country have every reason to believe will do something to help them? It is being postponed and postponed until the Government feels that it can be released without any of its aims, such as the privatization of Petro-Canada, being hindered. This is not a Government acting in the best interests of consumers or of the people of the country.

Mr. Marchi: Mr. Speaker, I listened attentively to my hon. colleague. He is right when he talks about consumers being upset with respect to increasing prices at the gas pumps. This is something that cuts across all lines. It is not specific to a certain region or community of the country. It cuts across all economic and class lines and is something that all individuals and families can appreciate. At the very time when the price of world oil is dropping at a very significant rate, they are going to the pumps and paying more. One response given by the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources (Miss Carney) in the House of Commons is that it has not worked its way through the system and the drop in world prices have not been reflected at the gas pumps. Yet this morning I had an interesting conversation with a visitor from Nebraska who said that prices in the United States are continuously dropping. Somehow, just to our south, that price decrease has worked its way into the system, yet we have a response that it has not worked its way through our system to be reflected in the price at the gas pumps.

• (1130)

Is the Minister's response a valid statement or is it just an excuse? The prices in the United States are definitely working their way to the pumps at the gas stations but we have not seen that happen in Canada. Why?

Mr. MacLellan: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for that important question. It highlights the difference between Canada and the United States where consumers have the benefit of a price decrease within a matter of days. In fact, in certain places in the United States where the price is lowest, such as the State of Maryland, Americans are paying approximately half of what Canadian consumers are paying for gasoline. That is an unconscionable difference, to the detriment of Canadian consumers.

The Minister tells us that we will have the benefit of this world price decrease but it may take two or three months to be passed on to the consumer.

Not only have we not seen a price reduction, there has been an increase in the price of gasoline even though the Minister