

*Petroleum and Gas Revenue Tax Act*

I am surprised that the Hon. Member for Abitibi, usually a diligent defender of the interests of his region, took this position in the House today.

Madam Speaker, the national energy policy was a series of measures. Today, we are talking about eliminating the petroleum and gas revenue tax, but this should be seen in its proper context. It was part of a whole. The national energy policy made it possible to promote Canadianization. Without this program, we would never have had so many Canadian enterprises getting involved in petroleum and gas exploration and development. Without our national energy policy, we would not have been able to spend the substantial amounts that were spent on petroleum exploration in the North and in our northern seas. Without the national energy policy and the assistance given energy development, we would never have been able to carry out oil and gas exploration in the East, especially in Newfoundland and other parts of the Atlantic region.

Ever since the Conservative Government, to all intents and purposes, eliminated the national energy policy, drilling rigs operating in the Maritimes have virtually disappeared. A few weeks ago I was in Halifax to deliver a speech and I put some questions to observers and journalists. It seems there is only one drilling platform left in Halifax harbour and it too is about to disappear.

Madam Speaker, another sector to which the Hon. Member for Abitibi did not refer and which has to be tied in with the national energy policy is the fact that the previous administration made a concerted effort to promote a home insulation program which was part of Canada's overall energy policy. In a recent address in Montreal even the present Minister openly admitted that the home insulation effort which was part of the national energy policy now accounts for an annual saving of 17 million barrels. Talk about a saving! This was made possible through the national energy policy.

Madam Speaker, if we were to consider this policy as a whole and prevailing conditions when it was implemented—oil prices were skyrocketing and most observers felt the price of a barrel of oil would go as high as \$56 or \$60—I think it was normal that a self-respecting Government would intervene and not let multinationals alone set and regulate not only prices but also the over-all economic development policy as well as the Canadianization of this industry, most of which was essential to us. These are some of the very significant achievements made through the national energy policy.

So now we have a Conservative Government in office, and they tell us that the only thing that really works is the marketplace.

Madam Speaker, I would like to ask you who creates the market for petroleum products in Canada right now? Is the price set by the Canadian companies? By the Government? By the producers, the smaller oil companies? Certainly not. All policies and prices are determined by a group of ministers from

what is called OPEC, who meet in Geneva and say that the price will increase or decrease.

The roller coaster mentioned by the Hon. Member for Abitibi (Mr. St. Julien) is not the effect of a well-balanced market. It is a monopoly controlled by a small group.

For my part, I have always said in this House, and I am still saying today, that if there is an efficient market, if a large number of producers and consumers are in competition each in their own sector and a fair price is set by producers who are not being forced to sell and buyers who are not being forced to buy, this is what a fair market should be.

However, this is certainly not the case here. That is not what is happening. Ten or fifteen Ministers from OPEC meet and decide that the price will go up or down. Now, our own Government says: As Canadians, we accept that. We have had enough of policies, of prices for consumers, of oil exploration, we are no longer going to bother with all that, we are getting rid of all those instruments.

We shall let the Kuwait Emir, the Arab Sheik, and so on, have their OPEC meetings and set the prices for Canadians. That is so true that this Government has neither the courage nor the political will to influence the decisions of its own Crown corporation, Petro-Canada.

I had some questions today for the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources (Mr. Masse), and in his absence, the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs (Mr. Andre) replied for him. Why is it that, in a situation where the market is for all practical purposes non-existent in my opinion, our national corporation Petro-Canada has decided to increase the price of gasoline in Quebec by 2 cents a litre even though the price was already higher in Quebec than in other regions of Canada?

The Conservative Government was more than ready to take the credit through its backbenchers for preventing a 2 cents increase in the postal rates. Imagine! At least, that is what the Conservatives said, but the Minister himself stated the same day that, rather than taking effect now, the increase would take place at the end of March. However, that is not the object of my argument. The fact is that we were told that the Conservative caucus could reverse the decision of a Minister to support the plans of a Crown corporation called Canada Post. It seems that the caucus blocked or at least postponed a 2 cents increase in the postal rates.

Yet, at the same time, another Crown corporation, Petro-Canada, is increasing the price of gasoline by 2 cents a litre in the province of Quebec, but this same Conservative caucus says that nothing can be done. These two Crown corporations belong to the same Government, are owned by Canada; in one case, the price increase for postal stamps is being blocked; in the other case, they say: If there has been collusion between the various companies, let the Hon. Member say so, and I will investigate.