

great deal of thanks to that member for having identified it as such.

Mr. Jack Whittaker (Okanagan—Similkameen—Meritt): Mr. Speaker, I rise today without some of the exuberance shown by other members on both sides of the House when speaking to this particular bill. I rise with the feeling of some depression, and I bring that depression with me, having just come back from a number of days in British Columbia. People in that province—and I have also seen this in Alberta, Newfoundland and other places in the country that I have been over the last little while—have a depressed feeling. It is not a depression in economic terms, although certainly the government has pushed us in that direction, it is an emotional depression where people are asking what is happening to our country.

During the last election, we were promised certain things. The government of the day talked about leading us into the economic future. But the feeling, which is reflected fairly accurately in the recent polls which show the government at an all-time low of 14 per cent, is here for a good reason.

People to whom I have spoken, life-time members until recently of the Conservative Party, have said they could not, and never would again, support the party into which they were essentially born and with which they have lived and fought for all these years, are now fighting with the party. I use the analogy of a family that has lost everything in a fire. They have worked their complete lives building up their assets and all of a sudden they see a total loss.

These people point out to me the problems with VIA Rail. They tell me our country is no longer the vision of the Conservative John A. Macdonald, of keeping this country together from the Atlantic coast to the Pacific coast. They see the breaking down of that under the government with the gutting of the VIA Rail lines and the privatization of Air Canada.

Yesterday, some of the worst fears of the people of Canada came about with the total devastation of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation by this government. That corporation was built over a period of time and has become what people from every region of Canada look upon as part of what keeps us together. It gives us the

opportunity in cross-Canada programs for the east coast to talk to the west coast to talk to northern Canadians.

We have seen over the past six years a whittling away by this government of that particular method of communication. But what do we have today? Once again, we are back to what is depressing the people that I speak to; Air Canada, VIA Rail, Canada Post, and now Petro-Canada.

People have looked on Petro-Canada as our opportunity to keep the foreign oil companies who seem to control us somewhat honest. It was pointed out in an earlier speech by one of the members of my party that what has happened over the last period of time is a program by this government to ensure that Petro-Canada is more and more like every other corporation, instead of that leader which people in Canada have looked for.

Over the past month or so, I have had hundreds of letters from people in my riding and from various other parts of Canada, copies of letters to the Prime Minister, and copies of letters to the minister of privatization, asking me to stand up and fight for Canada, to fight against the privatization of Petro-Canada, the last vestige of control we have as far as retailing or refining of oil is concerned.

It is interesting to look at history and see what happened, what the people in our history have said. Some of our recent history, I think, is worth looking at. The minister of privatization who has been so vocal in his heckling and what not this morning, said in this House on December 11, 1979, at page 2255 of *Hansard*:

—only eligible Canadians—eligible Canadians—should be permitted to own shares in Petro-Canada and only eligible Canadians—Canadians, I repeat—should be entitled to buy shares in the after-market. I have stated many times that the shares must go to and remain in Canadian hands.

That is the same minister who now brings forward a plan to turn over 25 per cent of Petro-Canada to anybody who wants it, to foreign interests. The particular amendments we are looking at, and that our party is pushing for, are to ensure that if this government is bent on privatizing this corporation, that the privatization remain minimal and the control of that corporation remain in Canadian hands, as the minister of privatization himself argued for in 1979.

But, Mr. Speaker, he is not the only one. The present Conservative House leader from Calgary stated on June 20, 1978, "I was a founding member of the committee for