

Oral Questions

As to the second part of the Hon. Member's question, Mr. Speaker, while obviously in any operation which which is as large a scale as in Employment and Immigration there are bound to be, upon occasion, examples which can be criticized by the Auditor General, which is indeed his job, I can answer with firmness, yes, I do believe that our administration is sound. Indeed, the Auditor General made some pleasing references to the fact that we were better placed than other administrations in other countries to carry forward to our clientele the kinds of services which Parliament has confined to us as our responsibility. Yes, I do believe we do that effectively. I do believe that we do that cost effectively. We do not do it in an absolutely ideal way, and therefore we are open to criticism which we are happy to receive, and to which I try to respond.

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NATIONAL ENERGY PROGRAM

AUDITOR GENERAL'S REPORT—CRITICISM OF MONITORING

Miss Pat Carney (Vancouver Centre): Mr. Speaker, my question is addressed to the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources. The Auditor General has reported that the National Energy Program is not being properly monitored to see if it is meeting its goals of energy self-sufficiency, Canadian control of the oil and gas industry, and the discovery of new oil and gas reserves. He said at the time of his audit that proper evaluation systems were not in place. How could the Minister spend \$5.7 billion of taxpayers' money without knowing what he is doing?

● (1440)

Hon. Jean Chrétien (Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources): Mr. Speaker, the Auditor General said that the challenge faced by my Department after the NEP was well met by the Department, and that the programs were well administered. In the case of this program, the law of Parliament was passed less than a year before the visit of the Auditor General. It is very difficult to make an evaluation in less than a year after a huge program such as this one has been put in place. They explained to the Auditor General that there was a monitoring plan. However, one cannot feel the effects of investing in drilling and oil and gas operations in a short term like that.

Anyone who knows anything about drilling knows that, when one drills for oil and gas, at times it is better to expect to have some dry holes. There were 300 wells drilled in the North Sea before the first oil discovery. If the Hon. Member reads all the report she will find that the Auditor General said that the programs were well managed. He wanted to have more monitoring of the program, and we said that we were putting such a system in place to satisfy him.

CANADIAN OWNERSHIP ACCOUNT

Miss Pat Carney (Vancouver Centre): Mr. Speaker, my supplementary question is also addressed to the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources. He may have had trouble tracking the money, but he certainly did not have any trouble spending it.

In determining that the National Energy Program was not being properly monitored, the Auditor General said that he could not find a single person in the Minister's Department who admitted responsibility for the Canadian ownership charge which collects about \$1 billion a year by way of the gasoline tax. Since the EMR bureaucracy has quadrupled since 1980 when the NEP was introduced, could the Minister please designate at least one person to keep an eye on this \$1 billion fund?

[Translation]

Hon. Jean Chrétien (Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources): Mr. Speaker, if you read the whole report of the Auditor General on the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources, especially on the implementation of the National Energy Program, you will find that he considers the program very well managed and that he is satisfied with the progress made. I am convinced that the problems which he raised, if any, will be solved.

The Hon. Member, as many others have done, takes a single aspect out of context, but if she reads the whole report several times, she will realize that he is fully satisfied with the management in my Department, especially after the sweeping changes made to the National Energy Program since 1980.

[English]

RESPONSIBILITY FOR CANADIAN OWNERSHIP ACCOUNT

Right Hon. Joe Clark (Yellowhead): Mr. Speaker, could the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources tell us whether he has anyone in charge of the Canadian Ownership account today, and does he know who it is?

Hon. Jean Chrétien (Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources): Mr. Speaker, the comment of the Auditor General concerning the Department of Energy has been received by my Department.

Mr. Nielsen: He does not know.

Mr. Chrétien: I do not know the name of that person.

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Chrétien: This comment is being looked into, but the Auditor General indicated that he was satisfied with the way in which the Department was managed, and that the tasks confronting the Department were very well achieved. There were some shortcomings in the controls, and we are making sure that they are overcome in the shortest possible time.