

Government Orders

says that the effect of this would be to prevent the ownership of shares in Petro-Canada while the Government of Canada still has shares.

What he is clearly trying to do is keep the government from an embarrassing situation where it will probably have some banana republic somewhere in the nether-nether land come in and see what a great deal Petro-Canada is and they can actually get a handle on Canadian energy reserves and resources. We just do not want the government to have other people in the energy sector and across the world sitting down comparing this government to one of those small banana republics because in this case that banana republic and its administrators will look a heck of a lot better than this government would.

Mr. Les Benjamin (Regina—Lumsden): Mr. Speaker, I want to begin by saying that over the last number of months I have never felt so depressed and distressed about the welfare and good order of my country and its survival, its independence and sovereignty and nationhood, as I have under this government, and I have been here under several governments.

I must say to be fair that the present Conservative government and the Prime Minister have accomplished some things. Their main one is that they have contributed more to anger and outrage, alienation, than any other government since Confederation if not before.

Mr. Speaker, you can make a list as long as your arm, whether it was the Crow rate, the at and east rates, the two-price system on grain, whether it was the post office, VIA Rail, Petro-Canada, or anything else they have privatized. All they have done is remove from our society and our country the kind of things that kept us together and working. Of course, the CBC yesterday was just as bad a tragedy.

I would not mind if it could not help it, if it did not know better. It is when the government works at it that I get angry and depressed.

Motion No. 2A states that the chairman and members of the board must be Canadian residents. Well, Sir, I would rather they had to be Canadian citizens, but residents if they qualify under the appropriate regulation I guess is better than nothing. So I will buy that.

• (1550)

Motion No. 14A changes the limit of foreign ownership from 25 per cent to 1 per cent. I will buy that, too. If we had to compromise somewhere in between that, well, let's talk it over.

I want to quote the present minister of privatization—I am sorry he had to step out for a minute—because in the late unlamented nine months of the Clark government in 1979, he took great pains to emphasize the Canadian ownership line.

On December 11, 1979, at page 2255 of *Hansard* he is quoted as saying:

—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.

I do not know what happened to him since then, because obviously he knew better in 1979. In fact, he was applauded when he made that statement in the House. I do not know what happened to him. He was not on the road to Damascus. He was on the road to Sodom and Gomorrah since then.

There is something else I want to point out. I hate to use these words. Anything that impinges upon and hurts, that cuts down Canadian independence, sovereignty and nationhood, that destroys many decades of traditional behaviour by Canadians to be something more than and different from other countries—particularly our neighbour to the south—is a betrayal. We have adopted and implemented measures and laws in Canada that are unique.

Some are the envy of many other countries. I will not go into a long list of them. Anybody who flies in the face of that—I am prepared to make changes in accordance with that history—I have to say and I do not want to but I will, I call that nothing more than traitorous behaviour. It is a betrayal even of the present Conservative members' forefathers in Parliament; Mr. Diefenbaker and Sir John A. will be rolling over. Maybe they are now, I have no way of knowing.

They sure as heck would not have stood for this. No way. I am not one noted for applauding Mrs. Thatcher, the former Prime Minister of Great Britain, but even in her privatizations, and there were a bunch of them, she