

tion. I say "if" because actions speak louder than words. It is fine to say that "we are going to open up government and listen to people more, that we are going to be a government that seeks consensus rather than confrontation." Those are fine sentiments, but fine sentiments betrayed by deeds.

If the government were serious about its sentiments, it would not be moving in the direction it is moving with Petro-Canada. If the government were serious about restoring the process of government to the people of this country, Petro-Canada would be retained as it stands. According to a recent Gallup poll, 75 per cent of Canadians say that the federal oil company should keep exploring for gas and oil, 57 per cent say it should be involved in buying oil from other countries, and 54 per cent feel it should be retailing oil and gas. A Gallup poll in July found that Canadians opposed selling Petro-Canada to the private sector two to one, or 48 per cent to 22 per cent. A majority of Canadians want to keep Petro-Canada as it is. Is the government not listening to this majority? If there ever was a misguided, misdirected, ill-conceived, and unfortunate policy, it has to be this government's policy on Petro-Canada.

Petro-Canada was established by a Liberal government to secure Canada's future energy supplies. Since it was set up it has done a great deal to achieve that end. It has stimulated exploration for oil and gas throughout Canada—in many cases entering into partnership with other oil companies—to ensure that exploration takes place which might not have been undertaken at all had the multinationals been left to themselves.

Petro-Canada is our very own national oil company. Despite what the government would have us believe, it is owned one hundred per cent by Canadians. Every Canadian citizen already has a share, already has a stake in Petro-Canada. It is our protection against the giant multinationals that care more about profit than about this country.

Petro-Canada works. It is the great Canadian success story.

**Some hon. Members:** Oh, oh!

**Mr. McCauley:** Mr. Speaker, I think we should note that reaction. This is a great day—the deaf hear and the dumb speak!

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. McCauley:** The government would end this great Canadian success story. Just last night the report of the task force on Petro-Canada was made public. If the government follows its recommendations it will destroy the national mandate of that corporation. Why would it do that? Who knows?

We know for sure that this government is not responding to some great feeling on the part of the Canadian public. In fact, just the opposite is true. Canadians support Petro-Canada as it is. Canadians take pride in the company and want to see it continue its work. Canadians do not want to see it chopped up, carved up to become some miniature Canadian Exxon or Sunoco.

#### *The Address—Mr. McCauley*

What reason can there be for the government's action? Well, if you read the report there does not seem to be any reason other than a dogmatic, inflexible desire to return to the antediluvian days of laissez faire capitalism. The report argues that the government should restrict itself purely to designing a public policy framework, leaving the actual operation to private companies. Would this government say the same of hydro? Would it say the same of the building of highways? Would it say the same of education? Of course not, and it should not say that of Petro-Canada. The work that Petro-Canada is involved in is every bit as essential as the building of roads, the provision of electricity, or the provision of education. This country needs energy to heat homes, to power industries, to keep the wheels of society turning. It is the one absolutely essential resource and, as such, it is desirable that government have every possible instrument at its disposal through which it can protect this essential resource.

If the government does not want to involve itself directly in petroleum operations, then what does the government want? We do not know the answer to that question. The answer to that question is difficult to ascertain. The task force says the government policy will be accomplished through the advocacy of fiscal regimes, appropriate regulations and incentives, as well as financial support. What that means in plain and simple English is more give-aways to an already over-fat oil industry. Not only does the taxpayer lose the profit from Petro-Canada but, in future, the instrument the Tories will use to effect their policy will be those tired old devices of corporate handouts and taxpayer give-aways. Surely, there is a better way.

There is more that is defective in the thinking of the government. The task force argues that there is confusion and uncertainty about Petro-Canada's goals and objectives. I suggest that the uncertainty and confusion exist in the mind of the task force itself.

**Mr. Beattie:** Have you read the report?

**Mr. McCauley:** No, and I do not think the task force has either.

I wonder whether the task force members bothered to read the act establishing Petro-Canada. Petro-Canada was created to secure our energy future. There is no uncertainty about its goals—its single purpose is to protect all Canadians. If anything, it has been too successful in this goal, for Petro-Canada has demonstrated that it is possible to serve the national objective and still make a profit. Would the Tories be so interested in privatizing Petro-Canada if it were not making a profit?

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The Tory policy on Petro-Canada is fraught with many contradictions. For example, the task force suggests that the new privatized company will operate much more efficiently because it will have only one goal, to make profits for its shareholders. And yet, in recommending a division of assets, the task force requires the privatized company to maintain a reduced interest in the expensive and risky frontier exploration