

*Petro-Canada Act*

**Mr. Epp:** No; they write letters!

**Mr. Hawkes:** The Minister of National Health and Welfare will probably not remember the first question that I ever asked her in June of 1980. In a series of question during Committee of the Whole I asked the minister if she believed more in the needs of senior citizens of this country than in the needs of the oil companies. As a member of cabinet and a member of the Liberal caucus she consistently stands in this House and says that she cares about health and about senior citizens. Last night, however, she voted to cut funding for those purposes by \$5 billion. As soon as the Petro-Canada bill comes to a vote, I suppose she is going to vote to give Petro-Canada \$5 billion. She is going to vote to take money away from health care and education and she is going to vote—

**Mr. Waddell:** Are you going to vote for it or against it? You have been speaking for 40 minutes and you have not said yet.

**Mr. Hawkes:** What is at issue here, Mr. Speaker, is an industry in which there are three important commodities: people, money and equipment. From day one Petro-Canada, as a state-owned oil company, has been and will always be in difficulty. In a competitive world labour market it has not been able to attract competent experienced people who will stay with it. The record shows that in its early days Petro-Canada had to pay 30 per cent over the industrial average in order to get staff; the record shows the remarkably high turnover rate of employees compared to the industrial average, and the record shows that people in senior positions on average have less experience and less skill. That is not a unique Canadian phenomenon; it is a characteristic of state-owned oil companies around the world. I think Canadians understand that.

If I owned a family farm that I had grown up on and gradually acquired, I would have learned a lot about farming. I would care about it because it was my land. But if the state came in all of a sudden and said, "We own your farm and somebody's campaign manager is going to be on the board of directors to tell you how to run the farm and he has no knowledge of farming", would it be expected that the farm would do as well as it had before? I suggest the answer is that it would not.

I hope that as hon. members opposite approach their task on this special committee and as they approach this bill, they will assist in bringing forward witnesses who will testify about the ease or difficulty experienced by Petro-Canada in acquiring staff. I hope we will hear some testimony about what they expect in the future.

Surely if hon. members opposite want to vote to turn \$5,000 million more over to a board of directors and staff, they have an obligation to examine whether an organization of that size will be able to attract and hold the kind of competent people who will spend our taxpayers' money wisely. This is the basic issue. We might wish it were not, or all kinds of things, but in reality nothing works very well—the Parliament of Canada, the family firm or Petro-Canada—unless the people within it have the motivation, the skill and the desire to make it work.

Before voting this \$5 billion for that purpose, surely we should ask ourselves that question.

• (1730)

The second question we should ask ourselves is the money question. I am not prepared to accept the fact that Petro-Canada needs another \$5 billion. But even if I were, surely hon. members opposite should join with us in obtaining an answer to the second question. If that money is needed, from where should it come? Should it come from general revenue? Should it come from the pockets of taxpayers at a time when 23 cents of every dollar is already going to pay the interest on the public debt? Should we increase the public debt and give it to the board of directors of Petro-Canada? Are there other ways of raising money which do not put such a heavy burden on Canadian taxpayers?

We used to have a system where people willingly put their own money into the development of resources. More than we think, we are replacing it with a system where money is forced out of people's pockets and put into the pockets of others—employees, boards of directors and landholders. We are taking it away through the tax system and giving it to a group of people who are not really accountable to Parliament but simply accountable to one man, the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources. Surely the committee should explore whether there are alternative ways to raise the necessary money.

Another question is a bothersome one to anyone who believes in Canada, in Canadian ownership and in Canadian development. Some years ago the present chairman of the board was chosen. Much of his background was in New York. As Petro-Canada spends dollars on ships, rigs, carpets, logos and signs, perhaps the committee should explore the degree to which it spends dollars in Canada on Canadian products and the degree to which Canadian taxpayers' dollars are being used to fund a corporation which, far too often for my taste, chooses to spend money outside of Canada, creating work in other countries. In that connection I wonder whether or not, on the exploration side, Petro-Canada has spent more dollars in other nations this year than it has in western Canada on oil and gas exploration. If so, would that be the definition of a national Crown corporation? Should it spend more money on exploration in other nations than it spends in our nation?

**Mr. Lalonde:** From where did you get that?

**Mr. Hawkes:** I throw it out; it is something for the committee to examine.

**Mr. Lalonde:** Yes, throw it out.

**Mr. Hawkes:** What is its record lately? Where is it drilling? Perhaps the committee should examine whether or not the oil reserves of Petro-Canada are going up or down. We know that through acquisition it acquires new reserves. If, for example, one owns a grocery store, starts to sell groceries off the shelves and simply spends the money, rather than purchasing new groceries from wholesalers to restock the shelves, one would