

who have not yet been identified, were unable to advise the government as to the extent of the shortage. That is what the minister said today. I might not have used his exact words, but that is the effect of what he told the House today. Those are the gentlemen who have advised the government to bring in this legislation. How, then, can we give credence to a government which asks us to pass this bill which is based on submissions of that kind from a board of this nature?

I have tried to keep this debate at a reasonable level. I have refrained from making the kinds of criticisms I should have liked to direct at hon. members opposite. Let me make this serious suggestion, however: there should be adequate discussion of this measure today, possibly tomorrow, and possibly even on Friday, although I do not know what business the government House leader proposes. Unless responsible ministers have told us by then, in the House, exactly what are the facts, this bill should not be debated further until it has been sent to the appropriate committee armed with the appropriate terms of reference. It should be before the committee for a very limited period of time and witnesses ought to be called so that we may discover what are the facts, what is the truth and what are the shortages, present or anticipated.

The members of my party and my friends to our left asked the government some questions today. Some political questions were asked, of course; nevertheless, there were some very searching, very earnest questions, designed to permit members of this House to find out what the facts are. The minister either did not know or, if he did know, he would not tell us. Under those conditions, we would be remiss in our duty if we were to pass this bill in its present form without knowing in more detail and with more certainty what are the facts. Until we know them, we must stand firm in our position.

We know that there are difficulties; we want to try to cure them. Legislation is directed at curing difficulties. When problem arise we legislate, in order to cure those problems, if at all possible. I and my colleagues want to approve measures which the government may need to cure existing problems. On the other hand, the government owes it to this House and the country to reveal with more accuracy what those problems are, and exactly how this bill will deal with them.

Mr. T. C. Douglas (Nanaimo-Cowichan-The Islands): Mr. Speaker, the measure now before us, Bill C-236, asks Parliament to vest the government with very wide powers for dealing with the energy crisis facing this country. I do not propose to deal with the details of the bill. Some sections, as we may urge when the bill is in committee, ought to be amended. I will deal mainly with the principles behind the legislation.

I suppose Canada is probably the only country in the western world which does not have legislation giving it authority to allocate its energy resources to meet the needs of its people. Personally, I have always been reluctant about giving to governments sweeping powers. On the other hand, when any country, especially a cold country like Canada, faces a situation like we face today, very wide powers are necessary, provided there are adequate precautions and restraints with regard to misuse.

Energy Supplies Emergency Act

My main concern at the moment is this: why did it take the government so long to introduce legislation creating an energy supplies allocation board for allocating resources according to the needs of the various regions of Canada? The government has taken a long time waking up to the fact that we are in the midst of a crisis. Warnings have been given by the oil industry, by the public and by members of opposition parties. The government was told of the situation creeping up on us, and these warnings were quite apart from warnings connected with the Arab-Israeli war. Yet the government went blindly along in its Polyanna spirit, closing its eyes to the impending situation.

When the minister made a Freudian slip in his speech and talked about the shortcoming rather than the shortfall, I thought he showed a guilty conscience and that he was cognizant of the fact that the shortfall was owing to the government's shortcomings. My criticism is not so much of this legislation as the fact that the legislation will merely provide a mechanism by which an oil policy could be implemented. An energy supplies allocation board is not, in itself, an oil policy. So far, we have not had an oil policy. After the minister's statement today, we do not know the oil policy framework within which this energy supplies allocation board will operate.

● (1630)

An oil policy has to set forth two things. First, it must ensure that adequate supplies of energy are made available to all the people of Canada who need them. Second, it must ensure that Canadians will not be required to pay unduly high prices for the privilege of using their own products merely because world prices are escalating for similar products from other countries. Those are the two basic things which must be included in an oil policy. We still do not know the government's oil policy. As a matter of fact, for the lifetime of nearly all of us here, the oil policy in Canada has not been established by the government. It has been established by the four multinational corporations which control 91 per cent of the oil production in Canada and 99 per cent of the oil refining in Canada.

I listened with great interest to the hon. member for Peace River (Mr. Baldwin). I enjoy listening to him because he is always so delightful and non-partisan.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hees: A great parliamentarian.

Mr. Douglas: He became quite vehement about concentrating power in the hands of the government. I wish he had been equally concerned about concentrating tremendous power in the hands of the corporate elite.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Douglas: What kind of an oil policy has the oil industry imposed on this country? With regard to supply, they have made sure that the supply went where they wanted it to go. Just imagine, this country, one of the few countries in the world that is self-sufficient in oil and gas and which has only 2 per cent of the world's supply, has been shipping more than half its oil and gas to the United