

Supply

for Canada was under some question. It was not clear to what extent our reserves were in place to ensure Canadian supply.

Much has changed since 1979 and, as our energy critic, the Member for Vancouver—Kingsway (Mr. Waddell) has indicated on a number of occasions, under appropriate conditions, where our security is assured, that exports of natural gas to the United States would be supported by the New Democratic Party.

Mr. Stewart: Mr. Speaker, I want to ask my socialist friend opposite whether we should pay attention to anything he said. He stated unequivocally that the new reform association that was formed in Vancouver was a Tory organization totally. I am sure he knows that Stan Roberts, a former President of the Chamber of Commerce, is a noted Liberal and is one of the three founding members. Why should we pay attention to anything the Member says when he makes a statement like that?

Mr. Riis: The reason I said that virtually everyone there was a Tory—

Mr. Stewart: I did not hear you say that.

Mr. Riis: If I did not say “virtually”, it is because I do not distinguish clearly between Liberals and Tories when it comes to policies in this country. Liberal policies on most issues are not clearly defined as being any different from Conservative policies.

If there is one political party that is different from the Conservatives and Liberals, it is the New Democratic Party. Let me state clearly that virtually all of the participants who are disillusioned westerners were card-carrying Conservatives and a handful were Liberals. As I said, however, I do not distinguish much between the two.

Mr. Jack Shields (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to participate in the debate today. I want to return to the comments by the Hon. Member for Cape Breton—The Sydneys (Mr. MacLellan). I will suggest to him that out of all the rhetoric we heard from the other side today, he has a real sense of the problems we face. I noted he listened attentively to what the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources (Mr. Masse) had to say. I think he understands the problems we are facing.

● (1240)

The National Energy Board in Canada, as a quasi-judicial board, may receive representation from the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources, the House of Commons Standing Committee on Energy, Mines and Resources, or from Members of the House of Commons, but, being a quasi-judicial body, it cannot be directed. It makes decisions as it sees fit in the national interests. That is Canada.

The Federal Energy Regulatory Commission in the United States, commonly called FERC, is also a quasi-judicial body.

It is set up very similar to the National Energy Board. It cannot be directed to adopt a regulation or policy in exactly the same way as the National Energy Board cannot. I note that the motion before the House refers to the weak and ineffectual efforts of the Government of Canada to oppose Opinion 256 of the United States Federal Energy Regulatory Commission. I wish to address my remarks to that aspect of the motion.

To begin, I would like to remind the House that the approach taken by the Government towards its energy policy is an approach which differs dramatically from the confrontational, divisive and unpredictable actions of previous administrations. In fact, I find it a bit ironic that the Liberal Opposition chose to denounce a decision by a U.S. regulatory agency which bears a very striking resemblance to the high-handed tactics embodied in the Liberals' National Energy Program which totally and absolutely devastated the oil and natural gas industry in western Canada.

Mr. Foster: Take a look at the number of jobs lost out there.

Mr. Shields: In contrast, the energy policies of this Government are built on the firm foundations of consultation, cooperation and consensus.

The Hon. Member for Algoma (Mr. Foster) tells me to look at the situation now. The situation now is that the industry can move and move freely. We are doing exactly what it has asked. We have deregulated, we have brought in the Western Accord, and never again, if the Meech Lake Accord goes through, will any Liberal Government be able to perpetrate such a disaster on a region in this country.

The Western Accord and the agreement on natural gas markets and prices have provided our oil and gas industry with a flexible market oriented framework in which it can compete effectively for sales in Canada and the United States. With respect to energy trade, we are taking a consistent approach to remove unnecessary regulator burdens and to rely on market forces as the most efficient allocators of energy resources.

Our policies have been successful. Our energy producers have been able to maintain and even expand market share within a highly competitive international market. Canadian consumers have also benefited from access to secure, reasonably priced, domestic energy resources. What really sets our approach apart from that advocated by the Opposition is that we work with the provinces, with industry, with the consumers and with our trading partners to develop policies which meet the needs of buyers and sellers.

We know we are on the right track since, following their January meeting—I might add that it was the first meeting since 1977 of Canada's energy Ministers—the energy Ministers jointly reaffirmed that adherence to market mechanisms is most important in ensuring that the most efficient decisions are made regarding energy supply and demand. However, we are not content to rest with these achievements.