

Oil and Gas

office in 1963, it laid it to rest. It has been buried ever since. That is a vital and important link in producing energy equality in this country today.

This government should have been moving forward with all the energy at its disposal toward harnessing the Bay of Fundy tides. Every member from the maritime provinces, regardless of political affiliation, agreed we should move forward with the development of power from the Fundy tides. What happened? It took over a year to convince the government it should re-examine the 1969 tidal power report which said that although the project was feasible, it was not possible because of the high interest rates.

Between 1969 and the spring of 1971, all members from the maritimes, regardless of party, had to fight with the government in order to get the report re-examined. Where is it now? It has been in the process of being re-examined for 2½ years. We will soon have to set up another committee to find the re-examiners. It just goes on and on. That is a resource that would have made a tremendous difference to the energy supply of the Atlantic provinces.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Coates: If it had been undertaken in 1969, we would be halfway toward the development of one of the great power potentials of this country. It ranks with the South Saskatchewan dam, the Columbia River system, the St. Lawrence Seaway and other great Canadian projects. It would have made a great difference in eliminating regional economic disparity in our area. It would have produced a resource the whole nation could have utilized, and it would have alleviated to a tremendous degree the problems we face today.

I could go on and on but I will just say this. If this government thinks it can solve the crisis we now face by fighting with the other parties in this House of Commons, it has to be out of its mind. The attitude of the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources has to change drastically, especially if he is now going to meet with the premiers of the other provinces. Are we to get the same kind of reaction from the other premiers that he unfortunately got from the premier of Alberta? I hope not. I hope we do not get the kind of reaction that was indicated here tonight to the hon. member for Qu'Appelle-Moose Mountain and the hon. member for Nanaimo-Cowichan-The Islands for the type of realistic, sensible Canadian speeches they made with no indication of partisan politics associated with them.

This matter is too important to all the people of Canada to be putting up with partisan politics. The minister had better realize that fact and start meeting with all members of parliament on an equal footing, to try to collect from them the very best he can in order to solve the most serious crisis that has faced this country in a long, long time.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. David Lewis (York South): Mr. Speaker, I fully agree with the last speaker about the need not to be too partisan. I cannot quite agree that he carried out his injunction in his own speech. I suggest the debate has

[Mr. Coates.]

already proved valuable. We have had some information this evening in the spirit in which the last speaker suggested. I am not going to castigate the minister for not having all the necessary information at his fingertips.

An hon. Member: Why not?

Mr. Lewis: I do not think it is possible. I do not think it would be possible for any member of this House, except some irresponsible catcaller, to have immediately available all the information about the cutback from the Middle East, a possible cutback from Venezuela, what may be available from tankers moving oil from western Canada to eastern Canada, and all the rest. I do not think any reasonable person should ask for statistical data of that sort at this stage. However, I think it is important to have this debate and get from the government at least some indication as to what it is thinking and is preparing to do. What is even more important is to have the Canadian people, particularly in eastern Canada and British Columbia, and indeed throughout the country, alerted to the problems that may face them this winter.

The first point I would underline is there now appears to be agreement among three parties, the other party did not say anything about it, that we need to have some kind of national agency for direct purchase of oil that may be available from Nigeria, Libya or Venezuela, as well as oil that may be available elsewhere. It should be a direct agency of the Canadian government. I suggest that is one of the most certain ways of guaranteeing supply to eastern Canada.

The hon. member for Qu'Appelle-Moose Mountain (Mr. Hamilton) said that he is in favour of such an agency. I hope he was speaking for all his colleagues, including the 19 Conservative members from Alberta. I assume he spoke for all his colleagues. The idea of a national petroleum corporation would then receive the support of the Conservatives. We have proposed it for many months, so the government can rely on our support. Therefore, there is no reason whatever why the government should delay setting up this essential national agency to protect Canadians, east and west, against the failure of supply of oil products in this country.

● (2150)

Perhaps there were difficulties in cabinet about the idea of a national petroleum corporation. Of course, I do not know, but I would assume there have been some difficulties because the proposal was made by the minister's own department as long ago as last April. Otherwise I cannot for the life of me understand why there should have been this long delay, unless there was a difference of opinion. But the minister can now go back to cabinet and assure the other members of the government that this idea now has the full support of the opposition—

An hon. Member: Oh, yeah!

Mr. Lewis: Apparently not, because the hon. member for Edmonton Centre (Mr. Paproski) says, "Oh, yeah!" So there is not full support on the part of all members in this House.