

Energy Supplies Emergency Act

was that he was not happy with the bill. He said that, in view of the environment provision, which I think is clause 24, it would be foolish for us to pass the bill, keeping in mind there are provincial responsibilities one must be aware of and concerned about.

In this regard I wonder why at this particular time, a time of concern, this government cannot understand that our federal system works on the basis of co-operation and consultation rather than confrontation. If anything is clear to me, to all members of the House and the people of Canada, it is the way in which this government has projected itself into the mainstream of this very important matter without having any consideration whatever for the requirements of the provinces, without any consideration whatever for our constitution, if I may call it that, the British North America Act, in terms of provincial rights. The provinces feel their resources are of such great importance that one sees them all going in various ways trying to beat the government. When one approaches a subject of such importance in a spirit of confrontation rather than consultation, then it seems to me the provincial governments have every right to put before the House their concern and the way in which they are going to handle this very serious situation.

Having read the preamble to this bill—I do not know whether it is the preamble but those who have more expertise will correct me if I am wrong—I am of the opinion that a very heavy onus is placed on the minister to indicate to this House just what crisis we are facing in whatever terms he can divulge it to the House. I have looked for such an indication in his speech. I did not peruse his speech in its entirety, but I did read some of the statements that the minister put on the record. I should like to repeat what the minister had to say when presenting to the House the atmosphere surrounding this emergency, or as we and others have called it, this crisis. I refer to page 8442 of *Hansard* for December 5, where the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources (Mr. Macdonald) said there had been established a technical advisory committee on petroleum supply and demand. Then, he went on to say this:

That committee, composed of senior representatives of oil companies and of the various departments of government, has continued to meet every week.

What I am more concerned about is this passage.

The recommendations prepared by that committee have been undergoing continuous review and refinement. The picture which emerges indicates clearly the possibility of shortages of middle distillates and heavy oils in the Atlantic provinces, Quebec and to some extent in Ontario. There is also the possibility of local shortages of these products in British Columbia.

● (2150)

I ask whether the possibility outlined there would indicate that we should be dealing with matters we might call national emergencies?

Let me move on again to quote from the minister's speech where he indicates that the province of Ontario appreciates the difficulties which may arise. On page 8445, the minister is reported as having quoted Mr. McKeough as stating:

In other words, Canadians cannot expect to escape the effect of a Middle East embargo on the United States. As a consequence of all

[Mr. Alexander.]

this, there is more than a possibility of a Canadian gasoline and heating oil shortage. We in Ontario must accept our share of the burden.

Is that the basis of the national emergency the minister has talked about? Let me quote again from the minister's statement as reported at page 8445 of *Hansard*. He is reported as having said:

As for the views of another provincial government, I refer to remarks made by the Quebec minister of transport as reported in *La Presse* for November 30 of this year. He indicated that he felt voluntary restrictions would not be adequate for the purpose of protecting the Quebec market. I quote from his remarks in *La Presse*.

"Voluntary restrictions, he explained, would not be adequate for the purpose of protecting us against a possible scarcity."

My point is that the shortage about which the minister speaks is only a possibility. Are we on this side of the House to assume that because of possibilities referred to by the minister there is a national emergency? I suggest that the answer is, of course not. Because we take this attitude we are being criticized, and the suggestion is made that we are against the national interest.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Alexander: I would tell you one thing I have learned since I came to this House, ever since the War Measures Emergency Act was proclaimed, I will never again let this government or any other government railroad legislation through this House without giving us the facts upon which such legislation is based. We must be given the facts in order to come to a conclusion as to the necessity for such government action. We were fooled once, but we will not be fooled again. This government will have to give us some proof of the necessity for granting these powers.

As I understand the situation the NDP do not like this bill but feel they should rush it through in order to support this minority government. I suggest that we are entitled to some proof by this government that these extraordinary measures are necessary. I doubt that we will have the opportunity of voting on this measure tonight, Mr. Speaker, but I must repeat that we in this party are concerned about the federal government taking powers which traditionally have been provincial powers. The federal government will be meeting with representatives of the provinces on January 21 and 22 of this year, and I hope that these difficulties will be resolved as a result of consultation at that time.

I see the minister looking at me now, and I assume he is doing so because of the suggestion by other hon. members that there must be consultation with provincial authorities. I also see an hon. member who is sitting in the government front benches, although I suspect he never will sit there as a matter of right, who questions my criticisms of the Saskatchewan government in imposing a provincial tax on crude oil exported from that province. What this bill suggests is that we give this five-man board sweeping powers with the right to delegate powers to an agency. Speaking on behalf of the Canadian people, I do not think we should give up our rights as parliamentarians to a five-man board which could in turn circumnavigate, mesmerize and emasculate the powers of the governor in council.