

Energy Supplies

In spite of the doubts regarding this minister, and in spite of the doubts regarding the veracity and motivation of this government, we have no desire to hold up this bill. We certainly do agree, sir, and it may well be that we will be the ones who will have to utilize some of the provisions of this bill to get the country out of the mess it is in, that a federal government needs certain legislative powers to direct and supervise the allocation of foreign energy supplies on which, thanks to the negligence of this particular government, we still remain dependent.

I think it is a travesty that this country is still dependent on foreign oil supplies, but because this government has put us in this mess I am afraid that we are going to have to go along and appreciate that a federal government will require this type of emergency legislation. We will not oppose this bill on second reading, but only on the condition that there is a very clear understanding that we expect a comprehensive and searching examination of this bill in committee, with full opportunity for us to make amendments and for expert witnesses to be called so that we and the people at large, the people in the industry and the people in provincial jurisdictions, can be assured that such a measure is needed and that such a measure will be for the benefit of all Canadians.

Our policy in so far as the official opposition is concerned is that once we are in government, if and as when it happens, our efforts will be directed to the objective that Canada will be the master of its own destiny in resource matters and, specifically, in oil and gas, that Canada's needs will be met with Canada's resources. We will have no need for an emergency petroleum allocation bill of the type which is before parliament at the moment.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Edward Broadbent (Oshawa-Whitby): Mr. Speaker, I listened with a great deal of care to the official spokesman on energy matters for the Conservative party. He seemed to go on some time before he got to the statement outlining his policy and, in fact, I think it was in the last sentence. I tried to write it down and I hope that I have not missed a semicolon or a comma, "that if the Conservatives formed the government that in terms of energy Canada would be the master of its own destiny." That was what he said in his conclusion.

I will come to the government in a moment because the minister, who has sat rather smugly through this crisis which he has created, is certainly not going to be ignored in my comments. We have an energy crisis which is genuine, and no one either outside this country, in this country or anywhere else, given the situation in Iran, has any illusion about this crisis, with the possible exception of our sherry-drinking minister who smiles his way through all crises.

The official spokesman for the Conservative party in dealing with the question of Imperial Oil not making sure that we got our allocation of oil on a continuing basis from Venezuela, said that he objected to a Crown corporation intervening in the process. That is the Conservative party's statement, and I listened with care, that Petro-Canada must not intervene and

[Mr. Lawrence.]

that the government must not take any other steps. If we are to be masters of our own fate, as the hon. member has suggested, and given the fact that every other oil company in this country is foreign-owned, how are we to achieve that result? The Conservative party did not tell us that.

The whole argument of the hon. member, in terms of his criticism of government policy, led to the inescapable conclusion, that if the multinationals got us into this difficulty, the multinationals must get us out. What an absurd conclusion! But that is the official position of the Conservative party on this issue. I do not think there should be any illusion about that.

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In spite of the fact that Venezuela and 90 per cent of countries in western Europe, have Crown corporations or state enterprises to deal with the allocation of petroleum resources because they take their obligations seriously, in this country the Conservative party says, "Leave it to the multinationals." That is not only absurd, but at this time in history it is totally irresponsible.

I want to turn now to the minister. Since September, 1975, the total period since the last energy crisis, the minister has had responsibility for energy policy. Forgetting about the broad range of energy policy and restricting my remarks to oil and gas, I would argue that there are three key components to that policy. There is the existence of Petro-Canada, there is the two-price system for oil, and there is the pipeline. Now that the pipeline has been constructed from Sarnia to Montreal to service the Quebec market and ensure that that part of our oil from western Canada goes to Quebec, it makes eastern Canada less dependent on imported oil.

Those are the three points of the policy that I would argue are devoid of content. Every one of those three was forced upon the Liberal government during the minority government of 1972-74.

When the minister waves the flag about Petro-Canada, I recall some private conversations in that period when the Liberal government of the day was by no means enthusiastic about Petro-Canada, the two-price system, or the pipeline. In order to survive a crucial vote at Christmas, 1973, and to protect their hide, however, they accepted all three items which were almost literally forced down their throats in order to survive. But that is history, Mr. Speaker. I would argue that those are the three principal elements of an otherwise vacuous energy policy. The last crisis was in 1973 at the time of the very substantial increase in price of petroleum products which was forced upon the world by the OPEC countries.

We now have another crisis, the one which gave rise to this bill even though the bill deals with it only in the most peripheral way. It came from the terrible—and they are terrible for the human beings involved—results of conflict in Iran in recent months. It is a terrible human tragedy no matter how one views the desirability or undesirability of the political outcome. At this point no one can have anything but sympathy for the people of that nation and what they are going through.