

Canada Oil and Gas Act

\$17.75 and \$40, the going world price, and distributed that to the consumer. It is exactly the same as if it collected a tax and then had a subsidy. Ministers chose not to do it because then it would end up in the accounts of Canada, in the "Blue Book," and the public would look at it and they might ask questions. Instead, they caused the same thing to happen through the Petroleum Administration Act, but then they do not have to acknowledge receipt of those revenues. They can then say, "We are only getting 10 per cent; we need more." That is plain deceit, plain dishonesty, and not the kind of posturing which will lead this country to work together in a unified way for the benefit of all Canadians.

As long as the Government of Canada feels it must make war on the provinces and on the private sector it will, as people in wartime do, cook the books and adjust the facts to suit its argument. We will then continue to live in interesting times, the kind of times mentioned in that old Chinese curse, "May you live in interesting times."

Mr. Speaker, this Bill C-48 will be a disaster for Canada if it goes through intact. I acknowledge the minister did say he would consider amendments at committee stage. I hope he means that and that he was not genuflecting in the usual way. I have had experiences with ministers of this government saying they want to be flexible and then finding out such statements are intended more for public consumption than a statement of their intention.

One of the most disturbing aspects of this bill is the amount of discretion allowed the government. There are 86 sections in the act, 32 of which provide for ministerial or cabinet discretion—32. That is almost half of the clauses in this bill which provide for discretion. That does not fit any definition of democratic government that I know. That is a kind of executive dictatorship. What the bill says is that we, the House of Commons, should grant to the minister in 27 of the clauses, and to the cabinet in four of the clauses, the discretion to do whatever suits them. Why are we here? Why is there a Parliament? Where is there a legislative assembly? We could end all of this nonsense, this time-consuming business of having debates, discussions, committees and what not if we would just pass one clause which reads, "The governor in council shall do whatever it wants." That is the most simple thing you could do. The public might wise up to that.

It is easier if you can sneak things through in bills like this, especially if you disguise it as some sort of Canadianization, some sort of attempt to bring under control these ugly multinationals, those parochial premiers, and those awful people in the oil and gas industry.

Let us look at some of the clauses. Clause 12 reads:

The minister may enter into an exploration agreement without a notice calling for the submission of proposals where he does not consider it to be in the public interest to give such notice—

The minister may, whenever he chooses, enter into exploration agreements. So if company XYZ made a good, healthy contribution to the Liberal party last year and the company president is a good guy and well known for his connections in the party, and he has been helpful to some friend, well, why

not? They could say that under the authority granted by clause 12 they can look after the president of XYZ. He is a nice guy, and why not? It is legal, and we know from this Prime Minister that if it is legal it must be moral. His moral code is the criminal code and nothing more. So if we made it legal we have made it legal for the minister to do that. Mr. Speaker, do you think that is a hypothetical case? It is not hypothetical.

I know of an oil company whose president is a staunch Liberal, who, prior to the promulgation of the manuals and regulations by the Conservative government in 1961 did get a land position in Canada's Arctic through his political connections. This has made that man a millionaire.

Clause 14 reads:

The minister may select any proposal submitted under this section for the purpose of negotiating an exploration agreement and in making the selection may take into account any factors he considers appropriate in the public interest—

In other words, he can do whatever he wants.

Clauses 22, 23, 26 and 27 grant ministerial discretion. He can do whatever he wants. The same is true with clauses 30, 31, 36, 37, 38, sections 1, 2, 3, 8, and on and on it goes.

Clauses 44 and 45 are the ones which are the real dandies. Clause 44 reads:

Where the minister is satisfied that a significant discovery has been made on Canada lands, he may, by order, make a declaration of significant discovery in respect of those lands—

So if the minister is satisfied there is an oil and gas discovery he may declare it is a significant discovery. So what then? If you look at clause 45 you will see why. It reads:

The minister, at any time after making a declaration of significant discovery, may order the drilling of a well or wells on the relevant Canada lands in accordance with such directions as may be included in the order, to commence within one year after the making of the order—

In other words, the minister sitting here in Ottawa being advised by the same people who wrote this bill may declare a significant discovery and order a company to drill a well. He can do that with no regard given to the matter that the company may have committed its exploration budgets to exploration in the offshore, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba or British Columbia. It does not matter that it may not be the choice of the company geologist, who is expert enough to have made the discovery in the first place, to drill a well. No matter what the circumstances are, the minister can order that a well be drilled.

Mr. Speaker, I ask you to imagine a situation, granted it is a hypothetical one, but one which is very real in the minds of people in the oil and gas industry in Calgary who are looking at potential investments. Imagine the situation in which your company has a piece of land and next door to it is Petro-Canada. Petro-Canada will be in the Arctic, not just as a 25 per cent participant with you but as an independent operator. So, Petro-Canada can have not only 25 per cent of your action, they can have 100 per cent of the action next door, on another piece of land. Petro-Canada and you share the same geology underneath and Petro-Canada says: "Gee, I would like to