

Canada Oil and Gas Act

It will use its regulatory powers to accelerate exploration in this area. Development must reflect the social and economic concerns and legitimate aspirations of the residents of coastal provinces. Furthermore, Canada's east coast fishery resources and the general environment must not be damaged in pursuit of energy objectives.

The acceleration of exploration in this area promises thousands of new jobs, supplying the services and goods needed to carry out the program. This represents one of the most exciting opportunities available to this region.

What is the goal of the provinces? What will be the role of the province in determining the economic, social and environmental goals and objectives, or the job opportunities? What role will the province of Newfoundland play? I am sure that the government of Newfoundland, whatever stripe it may be, speaks for the people of Newfoundland. Given the political realities of our country, it always seems quite normal and natural that the government which is closer to the scene is in the best position to determine the local economic, social and environment aspirations. Surely, that makes common sense.

However, here we have a bill and a policy directive which unilaterally imposes the federal government's thrust upon the development of a resource which could turn Newfoundland and other eastern provinces into have provinces, which could provide a dynamic way of life for their people, which could provide employment opportunities and improved technology, and above all would contribute to the goal of self-sufficiency. We on this side of the House still believe that goal is attainable.

It goes on to say on page 44:

Indeed, properly managed, the exploration activities could provide the basis for a major, sustained, economic upsurge. The Government of Canada will ensure that these opportunities are realized.

What guarantee do we have that this government will ensure that economic opportunities will be realized for the people of Newfoundland or the people from the north? It certainly does not have a very good track record. Look at what is happening to rail service today. We have a government hell-bent on dismantling the rail passenger service in this country after the Canadian Transport Commission studied, assessed and developed a route structure which this government has not even given a chance to be tested. We now have a situation where unilaterally, by cabinet edict, we are going to dismantle some 16 routes and cut back service on five others. That is to be interpreted as serving the best interests of Canada, without any local participation, without any avenue for appeal, without any formal way in which the people and the communities affected will have an opportunity to voice their objection? People are afraid of that. The people of Newfoundland and the people who have the potential to develop offshore energy resources are concerned that they will be left in the cold. Therefore, I have no hesitation in supporting the principle and the general thrust of my colleague's amendment.

The hon. member for Vancouver-Kingsway (Mr. Waddell) stated that we have not heard from the ordinary people of the north and the offshore, and I agree with him. The Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources (Mr. Lalonde) took exception to that comment. However, I believe it. What will happen is that

through the centralized, organized and bureaucratic mechanism which will govern these activities from the ivory towers in Ottawa, the ordinary people will in fact be overlooked. The minister replied that provincial governments do not act in the best interests of the people they represent. That is the implication. The hon. member suggested only the federal government has the power and the compassion to speak and act on behalf of Canadians in general. I believe people of local governments have a better understanding and a better view of the aspirations and needs of a given community or region than any federal bureaucracy, or minister for that matter.

● (1730)

The Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources in his remarks chose not to deal with the amendment. He talked about many things contained in the bill. He suggested that the bill is a major step forward. I suggest, however, that many will see it as a major step backward, especially when you look at the potential of bureaucratic centralized control. The minister places a very high priority on developing the potential of Canada lands. I suggest that if he is placing this high priority on the development of resources in the Canada lands, he should reaffirm his government's position on what it intends to do to develop further conventional supplies in the western sedimentary basin. Is the government writing the western sedimentary basin off? It appears that it is, given the fiscal tax regime it has established, given the way in which the National Energy Program is being applied and interpreted and given the fact there seems to be much foot dragging in getting a realistic pricing agreement. Perhaps the government is writing off the synthetic projects. The government does not seem to be too concerned or alarmed that the \$12 billion Cold Lake heavy oil plant project has been shelved indefinitely, or at least for two years. It is \$12 billion today with inflation at 10 per cent to 12 per cent, and with inflation at 20 per cent to 25 percent two years from now the cost will be \$15 billion. What about the jobs that have gone down the drain? What about the cost of providing expensive imported oil which has been estimated at approximately \$5.8 billion because of the delay?

This minister must take the people of Canada into his confidence and tell them what the government intends to do with respect to the other potential developments, the conventional sources and the synthetic sources. It appears that we are on the threshold of another postponement with the Alsands plant. What will that do to our goal of energy self-sufficiency? What will it do toward bolstering our economy? Those two megaprojects need to proceed if we are to ever recover economically and gain any semblance of the goal of self-sufficiency.

The minister again today chose to attack Alberta in his abrasive and continuing arrogant fashion. It seems to me that it is time for this minister to settle down. He has won the war in terms of pitting central Canada against Alberta. Why does he not sit down now and try to negotiate an agreement? I am convinced that had it been anyone else sitting on the treasury benches who was called upon to work out an agreement with