

Canada Petroleum Resources Act

come in do not carry out their activities, their exploration, their drilling and development work, without any regard for the people who live in the area. This is what we so very often find in our times. We have corporate interests at work and the individuals and the communities affected so profoundly by what the corporations do have very little in the way of legal resources to protect themselves against the corporations. If Members of the Government really support the principles which they so easily espouse on political platforms, in Speeches from the Throne, in debate here in the House of Commons and in after-dinner speeches, then surely they would want to include this measure in the Bill to ensure that benefit plans become part of the development. This would ensure that the communities would receive benefits and that local initiatives would be recognized and rewarded in the development.

● (1230)

With respect to Motions Nos. 14 and 15, surely we must have further attempts to ensure that communities, aboriginal peoples, and for that matter disadvantaged individuals or groups in other parts of Canada, will have a basis in the legislation to ensure that they will have benefits. To talk about local initiatives and to say that we must look to the people in the regions to save themselves because Ottawa does not have the resources and then refuse to include in the legislation a provision to give these people the resources and the legal rights which they need and which the Government should be providing, surely indicates the completely empty rhetoric of the Conservative Government. It is fine to talk about individualism. However, when Members say yea to these resolutions and then vote them down later when we stand in our places to indicate whether we are for or against, then surely the Canadian people will measure the rhetoric of the Government. It is at these times that the people of Canada must decide that these Conservatives do not actually believe in individualism and regional development, but that they want to give it all away to the oil companies.

Mr. John McDermid (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources): Mr. Speaker, I wish to reply to some of the claims made by members of the New Democratic Party. First, I cannot object to their theme with respect to opportunities for aboriginal peoples and so on in terms of their participation in land claims. However, I must point out that the Bill before us is an energy Bill. It is not a Bill dealing with aboriginal peoples. I would also like to point out that it is framework legislation. It is legislation which covers all Canada Lands for exploration.

To put into law the requirements which the NDP would have us put into law prejudices what is taking place in terms of the land claim negotiations. The Hon. Member for Thunder Bay—Nipigon (Mr. Epp) stood in his place and made wild and exaggerated claims that the Conservative Party of Canada is not interested in aboriginal peoples. That is utter nonsense and he knows it. The Hon. Member did not participate in any of the hearings with respect to this Bill when it was before the

Legislative Committee. He did not attend one meeting of the committee. He showed no interest whatsoever. All of a sudden he stands in his place today and talks about these measures. If the Hon. Members want to talk about action then let him talk about the Sechelt agreement signed by the Government and passed into legislation. That agreement shows our interest in aboriginal peoples.

The Government is interested in aboriginal peoples. It has maintained its contact with them in a meaningful way and it will continue to do so. What Members opposite are asking us to do is prejudice what will happen with respect to the land claims. If the Hon. Member were to take the time—and I am sure he has not—to read the Sechelt agreement and what is included in it, or read the COPE agreement, then perhaps he would have some idea of what this is all about. However, with the greatest of respect to the Hon. Member, he is all wet when he claims that the Progressive Conservative Party is not interested in aboriginal peoples. That is utter nonsense.

I wish to thank Hon. Members today for remembering that I was the spokesman for Indian Affairs and Northern Development when my Party was in opposition. I said at that time, and I stand by it today, that the aboriginal peoples of Canada have nothing to fear from a Progressive Conservative Government. The proof is in the action that we have taken to date and which we will continue to take.

My friend, the Hon. Member for Calgary North (Mr. Gagnon), made a very important point. He pointed out that this is framework legislation and that the Constitution will not allow us to single out individual people in framework-type legislation. Hon. Members talked about the Atlantic Accord. The Atlantic Accord is a specific Accord for a specific area. There is a preference clause in the Accord with respect to the peoples of Newfoundland, whether they be aboriginal peoples or not.

What is proposed by Members opposite is contrary to the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. There is nothing in the legislation before us—and I want to make this very clear—to prevent the very items that the Hon. Member is trying to introduce today from being introduced in land claim settlements.

Because of the size of our country there are different situations which arise in different areas. That is a given. I think even the Hon. Member opposite will agree with that statement. So to put these specific requirements into framework legislation, which is energy legislation, is something we oppose for the reasons I have stated.

Mr. Rod Murphy (Churchill): Mr. Speaker, I would like to respond to the comments made by the Hon. Member who just resumed his seat. He cast some aspersions on the Hon. Member for Thunder Bay—Nipigon (Mr. Epp) when he said that if he was interested he would have attended the committee hearings. In order to be fair to all Members we must recognize that under the reform of Parliament the committees of the House are smaller. It is not possible for all Members who are