

Energy Supplies Emergency Act

Mr. Baldwin: It may be very well for my friends to my left—and I know I will be criticized for saying so, but I hope in a good natured way by them—to make this move to have a measure of centralization, of authoritarianism. As I said to the hon. member for York South (Mr. Lewis) when he referred to Sheik Lougheed, he reminded me, as he talked to the ministers opposite, of Ali Baba and the 40 ministers! I know we are called the old line party, but I think the hon. gentlemen to my left, as a political party, are well into their political menopause right now!

With eloquent vindictiveness and political bombast, the hon. member for York South has been chastising us. That is his right, of course. He has the right to be wrong if he so desires, but he is probably the most highly paid talking doll in the business. If you press him almost anywhere you will hear him squeak “capital ripoff, capital ripoff”.

An hon. Member: Corporate ripoff.

Mr. Baldwin: “Corporate ripoff”. However, that is not part of this measure. I say to my hon. friends to my left in all seriousness that we have no brief for large corporations or small corporations or individuals who have no proper claim to assistance, and we will be making propositions to indicate this later. During the course of my speech I will make some proposals with regard to dealing with what might be a very serious situation because of improper conduct by the multinational corporations. I simply say, Mr. Speaker, that if it comes to a choice, as some day it may, it is my preference to keep the government as much as possible, from any unnecessary intrusion into the affairs of mankind. It is essential at times, sometimes temporarily and sometimes more than temporarily, and to that extent I am prepared to go along with it. However, as long as this parliament resists dealing in a firm way with the problems created by the improper conduct of multinational or other corporations, I much prefer to see vested in the dead hands of government the kind of powers which are asked for here and which, once granted, are not easily taken away.

Let me suggest some alternatives, Mr. Speaker. By a question I asked in the House two days ago, I have already indicated that so far as the crisis or the difficulties have been apparent, and to the extent to which we can accept, after working our way through the dense undergrowth, the various statements made by the Prime Minister and the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources outlining the facts, I believe the problems which have been delineated could well have been dealt with by existing legislative programs. The Export and Import Permits Act provides for a licensing of imports or exports to which can be attached firm, specific conditions spelling out precisely what an importer or exporter can or cannot do.

Last night, for example, we had the revelation that a refinery in Newfoundland was making a proposal to the government which would likely ease the present situation. I do not know the facts, and I can only hope this was a suggestion on a voluntary basis. But let me say categorically that if the government had chosen to act, it would have utilized that legislation and could have said to the company operating the refinery, “you cannot export except subject to the conditions which we lay down”. There is in existence today an export control list which

[Mr. Hees.]

includes petroleum products. All that would have been required would have been an order in council or a direction establishing the conditions under which export licences would have been granted or altered and, it would have been compulsory for that corporation to obey the order. It is the law of the land today. I point that out because it has some effect on what I am about to propose. The people of Canada, through the government, are not today defenseless; they have reasonable opportunities in the shape of existing legislation to deal with the problems which so far have come to light, which we have examined and which have been detailed in this House.

The same thing would apply to the other multinational corporations. It would have been consistent and quite in accordance with the provisions of that legislation, in the ease of a multinational corporation in Canada which was receiving supplies of petroleum products from Venezuela under a contract, and which acquiesced in a diversion of those petroleum supplies to other countries, for the government to lay down conditions. Such a case would come within the scope of the legislation. The government could say to the companies, “These are the conditions under which you are operating and under which you are given a licence.” Those conditions could be set down and insisted upon. The government could insist upon compliance with those provisions both on the part of the supply company in Canada, and on the part of the supplying company in Venezuela. If, by any chance, a simple amendment was needed to bring about such a result, that could have been done. I have only looked at the legislation casually, but I say as a lawyer that that right exists today.

● (1620)

The problems which we face are, first, those concerning the possibility of diversion, and those concerning refineries in Canada which should not need to export their product but utilize it in this country. I suggest to members of the House that this right exists today. If it were necessary to go a step further, the members of my party would consent to any simple amendment which might be required, just as we would have consented perfunctorily to the kind of simple legislation the minister led us to believe would be produced today, which was to deal with allocation of supplies at the wholesale level as well as other questions to which we have referred.

Let me say finally what our position is. In view of the limited facts which have been given to us, the contradictory statements made by the Prime Minister, the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources (Mr. Macdonald) and other ministers, I would be extremely reluctant to approve second reading of this measure without giving it further examination. If I were to approve it, I would consider that I would not be discharging my responsibilities to the people of Peace River and to the people of Canada. I would not subscribe to this legislation in its present unpalatable form on the basis of the indifferent case which the government has attempted to bring forward. That is my position today.

Before this debate on second reading concludes, I hope the government will produce better evidence, more concrete facts, as to what are the problems. In his opening statement today, the minister said that the technical advisory board, these holy ghosts, or these deputy holy ghosts