

Summer Recess

Of course the Liberals then had an election and they formed the government. I ask hon. members, did the Liberals come in and say that that was a terrible sell-out? They could have. They could have said that they would change the situation and would not allow the gas to go to the United States. But no, they did not do that at all. Having described this as the greatest sell-out in history before the election, one of the first things the Liberals did after they assumed office was to increase the level of exports of natural gas to the United States by .75 trillion cubic feet.

I do not know who wants to sell out this country faster, the Liberals or the Tories. You make your choice, Mr. Speaker.

An hon. Member: The Liberals win by a nose.

Mr. Broadbent: What I do know—and this is the point I want to make and the argument for the pipeline—is that the Americans know that they can buy our gas. And if you were an American—and I do not blame them one bit—why would you be interested in building a line that is going to be a very risky venture in the northern part of Canada and into Alaska which will cost many billions of dollars, if Canadian political parties are suckers enough to sell natural gas?

Specifically on that point, in case one is inclined to think that this is simply New Democratic Party partisan politics, I refer you to a source, hardly a socialist source, Mr. Speaker, it is once again the Comptroller General's report to the United States Congress. I ask you what does he say about this? This is what he says about the Alcan pipeline:

While this project could supply 800 billion cubic feet of gas a year to help close the 1985-90 gap, conservation and non-traditional domestic sources could possibly produce significantly larger amounts than have heretofore been anticipated. In addition, foreign sources—

And guess who he has in mind? The Comptroller General's report continues:

—could supply at least 2 trillion cubic feet yearly, assuming favourable government policies (see table 3 on page 27).

The Americans have no doubt that either with the Liberals or the Tories in power they will get, from their point of view, favourable government policies. These are just the opposite from the Canadian point of view.

The sixth reason we have for believing that the pipeline is not likely to proceed in the north is the very building of what I have euphemistically described as the pre-build section. This accurately describes the gas export pipeline project on which the Liberals are now embarking. This act ironically goes against the building of the whole pipeline in the north itself because we are providing a facility in the south to get them good cheap Canadian gas. The more we provide them with good cheap Canadian gas, the less interest they will have in extending the pipeline to the north to get access to their own much more expensive gas. For anyone but a Liberal, that, I think, makes elementary economic sense.

Now I come to reason number seven. I ask you, Mr. Speaker, do large petroleum companies have an interest now in getting that Alaskan gas down as quickly as possible to the lower 48 states?

An hon. Member: Not a chance.

Mr. Broadbent: That is right, not a chance. They do not have an interest. I ask why? Because the oil companies want to do for their purposes what the New Democratic Party says that we as a nation should be doing for our purposes. The oil companies have an interest in keeping the Alaskan gas in Alaska for the present time. The reason for that is because they do not want to increase the supply. They do not want to flood the market and bring down the price. There is already what is called in the trade a bubble appearing in gas supplies in the United States. The very fact the American government has given in to the multinational oil companies, that is the big oil companies which control basically the development of this natural gas, and the very fact that they do not have a long-range interest in increasing the supply of the natural gas because it will reduce their profit margins, make it very unlikely indeed, in our judgment, that they will be proceeding quickly with the development of the northern portion of the pipeline.

Finally, there are certain regulatory barriers which were created by the American government itself in 1978 which have forced Foothills to say it will not go ahead with the northern portion of the Canadian part of the pipeline until these regulatory barriers have been changed. I think it is very interesting—and I will not go into them in detail—that the wording of President Carter's letter which was tabled in the House on Friday obliquely makes reference to these barriers. But does President Carter say that he will take immediate steps to change these barriers? Does he say with determined, decisive action that they will meet their commitments overnight? Not at all. He makes a general reference again to the future that if there should be problems, then he would take action. According to Foothills, the problems will not exist at some time in the future. They exist now. Once again, if the American administration were serious about getting the northern portion of the pipeline built, it would be taking concrete action today rather than making vague promises about the future.

• (1550)

What do these eight reasons add up to? I have taken time, because it is central to this debate and to our concern, to demonstrate the implausibility of building the northern portion of the line, whether it is going to be built on schedule or, conceivably, not even built. What these points add up to is precisely the conclusion that our energy critic and others in our caucus have been alluding to for many days now. They mean that we are certainly not going to get the northern portion of the pipeline built by 1985. In my judgment it is quite possible that the northern pipeline will not be built at all. That is what it means.

It also means that with this measure the Liberal Party of Canada have done once again what they are so capable of doing, namely, selling out our resources. Canadians will recall that it was the Liberals in the early seventies who told us that we had—what was the figure—390 years' supply of oil. We had centuries' supplies of oil. Then they proceeded to sell it