

Mr. Robert C. Coates (Cumberland-Colchester North): Mr. Speaker, there has been a short interlude between the speech made by the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources (Mr. Macdonald) and the beginning of my speech. Maybe, just maybe, we shall derive some benefit from that interlude, as questioners probably secured more information from the minister's answers than was contained in the minister's speech. Speaking as a member of long standing—

An hon. Member: And good standing.

Mr. Coates: —and good standing, as an hon. member suggests, I am disappointed to note that the high level of debate initiated by the hon. member for Nanaimo-Cowichan-The Islands (Mr. Douglas), who was followed by the hon. member for Qu'Appelle-Moose Mountain (Mr. Hamilton) and then by the spokesman for the Social Credit party, should have deteriorated into the usual nonsensical type of argument that was produced by the minister. Members of the other parties indicated that they were Canadians first and partisan second. They are anxious to find a solution for all Canada and want out of the mess that this government has got us into. They want to do something about it.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Coates: Now, for the benefit of the minister, I want to talk about the Atlantic provinces.

An hon. Member: He can't take it; he's leaving.

Mr. Coates: The minister is leaving his seat. As often happens with this government, when you talk about the Atlantic provinces the government seems to think that Canada stops at the borders of Quebec and New Brunswick. As Canadians in the Atlantic provinces, we have contributed more and received less than the people of any area of this nation. We have contributed more because we opted for Canada in 1867, and while we have watched others derive greater benefit, we have not given up on Canada. You do not hear cries about separatism from my area of Canada. However, Mr. Speaker, we feel that the government has thrown us to the wolves. It has shown unbelievable lack of foresight in making sure that we have a simple supply of sufficient fuel with which to protect ourselves and our families during the coming winter. No part of Canada faces harsher winters than the Atlantic provinces, and in no part of Canada are there fewer dollars to meet the escalating demands associated with the increasing prices of oil and gas.

One of the things my leader has offered Atlantic Canada and all Canada is the right to the benefits associated with our offshore oil and gas exploration. Yet what has this government given us? Its attitude with respect to our offshore resources has been arrogant and intransigent. Clearly, the government's attitude has affected materially the exploration for these resources. There has been no agreement. It was all right for some provinces to enlarge their territories by pushing north. The Maritimes cannot push their territory in any direction except to the sea. They are told that they cannot have their offshore resources and that they must be shared with the rest of the people of Canada. All too often the people of Atlantic

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Canada feel government concern stops at the Quebec and New Brunswick border.

Again, during these days when we are debating this critical situation we hear statements concerning the expansion of the pipeline to Montreal. Mr. Speaker, we are part of Canada. If pipeline extensions are required for the protection of the public, those extensions are required for the Atlantic provinces. They should be to the Atlantic provinces. We must tear down the type of Berlin wall the government is trying to erect between Quebec and the Atlantic provinces. Indeed, Quebec has been willing and anxious to join with us in our efforts to secure justice with regard to offshore oil and gas. At the very least, the federal government should make an effort on our behalf, similar to the effort it is making with the province of Quebec, with respect to the development of our resources.

The hon. member for Qu'Appelle-Moose Mountain did not argue with the government. He tried to act as a good Canadian. He ignored the many areas in which he could have been terribly critical with regard to the government's lack of appreciation of problems that the country faces. In looking for a scapegoat, the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources referred back to the Diefenbaker administration of 1961 and suggested that the blame for dividing eastern Canada from western Canada in the matter of oil use rests on that administration.

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This government is like Rip van Winkle: it has slept and slept and slept. Suddenly it has now awakened to discover there is a crisis afoot because the situation today is not the same as it was in 1961. The hon. member for Qu'Appelle-Moose Mountain could have taken that and other situations where lack of foresight on the part of this government was glaringly obvious and raked them over the coals. That was not his objective. It was not his reason for speaking tonight. His reason was to try to find for Canadians the most realistic solution to the problems that face this country today. The Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources refused completely to accept that. All he wanted was to get into a fight with the opposition. At one point he said the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Stanfield) sat there with his mouth open all through his speech. No wonder his mouth was open; he must have been aghast at what he was hearing from the minister.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Coates: I feel certain that some Canadians who would not believe it before, can now appreciate why the Premier of Alberta and his government were shocked at the way this government has been acting with regard to the oil and gas crisis that now faces this country.

There are many other areas I would like to cover but I cannot do it in the 15 minutes available to me. However, I want to point out that this government should have been doing something that was initiated by the Diefenbaker government in 1958. That was the development of a national power grid. That concept was kicked off by the then prime minister, the right hon. member for Prince Albert (Mr. Diefenbaker), in 1958 during a speech in Kitimat. It was followed up by the hon. member for Qu'Appelle-Moose Mountain. When this government took