

Canada Oil and Gas Act

right to tax its own natural resources. Let us imagine that the Lac-Saint-Jean area finds huge amounts of oil; sure enough the state government or the government of the department of Lac-Saint-Jean would tax its resources and sell them to the rest of Quebec and to other countries as well. Of course they would sell to other countries at world prices, and people from Lac-Saint-Jean would be anxious as well to secure the international price, even for sales made to Quebec. And I am sure that the central government of the province of Quebec would then impose prices for domestic sales, just as we are doing now for Canada. And yet, Mr. Lévesque does not understand our philosophy, when it is applied to Canada as a whole.

The members of the federal government want one energy price, they want a standard price in all regions of the country for all Canadians. It is very easy, to understand, Mr. Speaker, that if oil were sold at \$3 a gallon in Quebec, in the maritimes and in Ontario and \$1 in Alberta, this would result in a dramatic economic slowdown. We all appreciate, and it is easy to understand, that all new industries would prefer to go to Alberta and we would witness a massive exodus of people from the eastern provinces to Alberta. There would be tremendous unemployment in eastern Canada and a boom and galloping inflation in Alberta. This is why our basic policy has been to maintain stable and fair prices for all Canadians.

Not so many years ago, Mr. Speaker, we had the Borden line legislation. At that time certain Canadian provinces, including the major parts of Ontario, had to buy Alberta oil at a price higher than the international price to promote Albertan oil sales. Today, it is the opposite. Alberta is subsidizing other provinces that use its oil, by selling it at a cheaper price. But who knows if five years from now, with the discoveries in the Soviet Union where huge amounts of oil have been found, apparently more than anything that may exist in the Middle East, the international price may be lower than the price we would pay for instance for tar sands oil. It is my conviction that if this happened the Canadian government would then force other Canadians to pay the higher domestic price for Alberta or other Canadian oil. Therefore, Mr. Speaker, we will continue with a uniform policy for the well-being of all Canadians. I thank you for the opportunity to speak on the matter.

● (2130)

[English]

Mr. Dave Nickerson (Western Arctic): Mr. Speaker, they always save the best to the last.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Nickerson: It is rather unfortunate that there is nobody left to hear what I am going to say, at least in the galleries. I do hope that somebody is watching on television.

Mr. Scott (Hamilton-Wentworth): What you do mean, there is nobody here?

Mr. Nickerson: I am very pleased that the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources (Mr. Lalonde) saw fit to come back to the House. I have a few choice comments for him in the few remarks which I intend to make. I must say that I have been looking forward to the presentation of this bill for about ten years now. It was originally promised a little over ten years ago by the late hon. Sidney Green—

Mr. Blais: You mean Joe Greene.

Mr. Nickerson: We certainly have good reasons to forget.

Mr. Lalonde: You forgot Sidney Green.

Mr. Nickerson: Members on this side of the House have asked continuously for the last ten years when the government was going to present rules and regulations governing the disposition of oil and gas in the areas referred to in this bill. The answer that we have always received has been, soon. I remember asking the same question earlier this year of the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources. His reply at that time was "very soon". If nothing else, we now have an interpretation of these Liberal terms. When they say soon, they mean ten years, and when they say very soon, they mean ten months.

Mr. Lalonde: Four months.

Mr. Nickerson: Was it worth waiting ten years? Quite frankly, I do not think so. I was looking forward to this. I was looking forward to something which would get the offshore oil and gas industry back on its feet again. But somehow I do not think we have it here. To understand this we must examine the present circumstances, the circumstances at this time when the bill is being introduced. It comes after ten years of neglect and wavering, after ten years of putting Canada's industrial and energy needs in second place to narrow, partisan consideration. The result is the situation we have today. The situation we have today is one of dependence on insecure, high-priced, foreign sources of energy. There is no denying that. That is the position into which the Liberal government has put this country. It comes at a time of serious conflict between the provinces and the federal government which is intent on imposing at all costs its concept of a centralized and socialized Canada. As we go through this bill we see two concepts throughout, the concept of strong control from Ottawa and the concept of the government ownership of Canada's oil and gas industry, something which it has been trying to promote with the concurrence and at the instigation of our friends to the left for some time.

There are two ways in which we can look at the present energy situation in Canada. First of all, there is the view from this side—my view and the view shared by my colleagues. We recognize that we have problems which have developed over many years of Liberal rule, but we look upon them as a challenge. We know that Canada has the potential resources, or the resources we need; more resources perhaps than anywhere else in the world. Certainly this country is greatly endowed with such resources as oil, gas, uranium and hydro potential. All we have to do is to implement sensible and