

Oil and Petroleum

embarrassing, but harmful to the provinces, can be found in the statement made two days ago in Paris by the Quebec premier, when he dealt with enriched uranium.

And, right away, the minister responsible in Ottawa immediately said: In any case, they cannot pass that agreement with France until I give my approval. We know that the premier of Quebec had the courage, while very far away from Quebec, to accuse the federal government of playing the role of a customs officer with respect to that project. I hope he will repeat that in Quebec, for example. I also hope that our members when they sit here will urge him to do so.

So, the stakes, the objective, is respect for the provinces. I think the government must set the prices and distribution with them in the interest of every citizen. And that is possible. Through many additional meetings with the provinces we will be able to make the distribution to the extent that some provinces will be able to do so. The redistribution of our wealth with the other provinces, to the extent that it is acceptable, must be done. It is not because the federal government would have all the powers that it would be the only one capable of making that redistribution. Why, if we were able to have an agreement a year and a half ago on that oil issue with the co-operation and the participation of the provinces, would it be impossible in the future to have prior negotiations within the spirit of the constitution. Indeed, the powers of the provinces must be respected. I am happy to see, Mr. Chairman, that this time the province of Quebec is not necessarily directly involved. But, indirectly, in a general way and in the long term, all provinces will be embarrassed if this bill should ever be passed. Indeed, there are signs and statements from our ministers in Quebec that are disturbing. I read recently a speech by the Quebec Minister of Communications who was concerned—

An hon. Member: Another separatist.

Mr. La Salle: Another separatist. Because one is not a Liberal in Quebec, Mr. Chairman, it seems one is necessarily a separatist. That opinion is not worth much.

The Minister of Telecommunications, who has a lot of problems with his counterpart in Ottawa, recently showed his discouragement about federalism and its future in a speech before the Chamber of Commerce. I believe this is a warning that our members from Quebec in Ottawa should seriously consider when they hear people like Mr. St-Pierre, Mr. L'Allier, Mr. Choquette and so many others. And the Solicitor General (Mr. Allmand) is aware of this from his recent discussions with Mr. Choquette. He always receives negative answers and Mr. L'Allier goes on by saying that he is concerned and sad that this support is not sufficient.

Therefore, Mr. Chairman, we must force the government to respect the rights of the provinces. For my part, I refuse to support such a bill which puts the provinces in a straightjacket. And it is not the first time that this government is tempted to do so. I therefore say right away to the provinces: Wake up and unite or else you will soon be considered unimportant entities by the federal government. Those are, Madam Chairman, the few comments that I wanted to make about this bill which is vitally important for the future of our country. I believe that all

[Mr. La Salle.]

those who respect the rights of the provinces wish that this national harmony be realized fundamentally in each of us.

It is not with coercive measures like the one under consideration that we will reach this goal. I recognize the good intentions of the minister, but I do not accept the means he suggests. I regret that I do not have more support from my colleagues from Quebec since this bill is essentially against the federalism principle. People will regret the silence of these members and I invite all of them to prove to the government that there is a way to help Canadian citizens. But we must take other means than those suggested.

● (2120)

The Assistant Deputy Chairman: The hon. member for Bonaventure-Îles-de-la-Madeleine.

Mr. Béchard: Madam Chairman, I am not answering the invitation of the hon. member for Joliette, but I would just like to know if he would answer a couple of questions.

The Assistant Deputy Chairman: Would the hon. member for Joliette accept a question?

Mr. La Salle: Yes, Madam Chairman.

Mr. Béchard: Madam Chairman, the hon. member for Joliette said earlier in his remarks that he did not care about Canadian unity. I should like to ask him how the bill before us tonight deny any right over the provinces' natural resources, as he said so well in his speech? I put the question to the hon. member for Joliette.

Mr. La Salle: Madam Chairman, I am pleased to answer the hon. member for Bonaventure-Îles-de-la-Madeleine. First of all I said I could not care less for national unity, because it is an aim that has not been reached. I am talking about national harmony. Admittedly the provinces are different.

An hon. Member: It is quite different.

Mr. La Salle: Yes, it is quite different. On one hand, we refer here to national unity, but there has been too much sermonizing about it, Madam Chairman. Then I am asked where the bill provides clearly that in case of disagreement among the provinces, the federal government will go to great lengths not to butt in. I say that we have no right to make any decision about those measures for the provinces.

Thus the provinces are deprived of rights acquired according to the spirit of the bill now under consideration which explicitly states that if there is disagreement, the government will decide. The government should not decide, but call together the provinces and co-operate with them. The provinces have control over their natural resources. It does not rest with the federal government to abolish their rights.

Mr. Béchard: Madam Chairman, the member did not answer my question. Would he answer another question. Can he say whether his speech or those he has delivered in the House during the past few weeks are drawn from his daily reading of the separatist newspaper *Le Jour*?