

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Harding: The bill provides for the creation of a five-member board whose task will be to prepare, review and maintain contingency plans in readiness in the event of an energy shortage. The board will also be given power to impose mandatory allocations of energy sources, and to ration supplies. This power is contingent upon a decision by the cabinet that a national emergency exists. Such an emergency could arise as a result of actual or anticipated shortages of petroleum or disturbances in petroleum markets which affect, of might affect, the national security of Canada.

The Conservative party says these powers are excessive. They say the government has to prove there is an energy crisis to justify the legislation and that its provisions are an infringement of provincial jurisdiction. What is the solution offered by the Conservatives? It is to wait until the federal-provincial conference on January 24 and then deal with the legislation. But what would happen should a crisis develop? We cannot forecast what might happen in the tense international field to further upset our oil imports. Again, internal problems of supply might arise. The official Conservative position of delaying action is not defensible.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Harding: It is an indication of their inability to grasp the seriousness of the situation and of their lack of concern about preparing for an emergency which could seriously affect the nation. Their present attitude stands out in sharp contrast to their concern for the welfare of the multinational oil corporations.

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Let us look at the events which have taken place in Canada in the energy field over the past few months and at the role played by the various parties in this House. It should give us a clear indication of who is really fighting for the best interests of Canada and Canadians. A number of Conservative members have told us that they have fought for the pipeline to Montreal for a number of years. Let the people of Canada know that it was a Conservative government which, in 1961, brought in legislation to stop the building of the pipeline from Sarnia to Montreal.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Harding: And in their 1969 election literature, Mr. Speaker, they did not say that they were going to build the pipeline to Montreal; they said that they would consider the building of the pipeline to Montreal.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Harding: If it had not been for the Tory party, and for their short-sighted energy policy in 1961, we would have had the pipeline into Montreal and Quebec and would not be worrying about a shortage of oil for the people in eastern Canada. It is the official opposition that are really to blame for the energy crisis today, and they are trying to talk their way out of it by using the little gimmicks we have heard in this particular debate.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Energy Supplies Emergency Act

Mr. Harding: There are one or two points I should like to make about the bill. One section deals with the environment.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please. I suggest that the House give the hon. member an opportunity to be heard. His voice I continue to hear but I think he has to force himself. Not everything that he says has to be greeted by applause or disapproval. The hon. member for Kootenay West.

Mr. Harding: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I was talking about one section of the bill. There are a number of sections with regard to which our party intends to offer amendments, but one of the provisions relates to the environment. One of the members this afternoon spoke very eloquently on this matter, and I agree with many of the remarks he made concerning changing this section. I think it is foolish to pass legislation without consulting the various provinces and ministers and taking into consideration legislation which they have on their statute books. This is why consideration must be given to changing this particular section, and as I say our party is going to offer an amendment to try to improve the bill in this regard. We are going to bring in other amendments to the bill as well. I shall not discuss them at this time; the proper place to do so is in committee.

In closing, may I say that this is no time for any party to play politics since a possible energy crisis is facing Canadians.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Harding: We can sit around the committee table, and hopefully amendments will be offered by the official opposition, by our party, by the Social Credit party and indeed by government members themselves, and I hope they will be given serious consideration. I am certain that basically most members of the House are anxious to assure the Canadian people that we are really trying to set up the type of legislation that will enable us to meet the energy crisis to the best of our ability, should such a crisis eventuate. But let every one of us hope and pray that we do not have to use the emergency measures which I think we should give the government in order to plan for the crisis in the event that it hits us later on this winter.

Mr. Lincoln M. Alexander (Hamilton West): Mr. Speaker, I had very little intention of taking part in this debate, but a certain confusion exists in my mind. I am not an expert on this particular subject but I do not think that prevents me from speaking of the concern I have over the principles that I see the government accepting and which we must, of course, challenge; there is no question of that. I listened to the hon. member for Kootenay West (Mr. Harding) who for ten minutes carried on just in order to have an opportunity of—

An hon. Member: Filibustering.

Mr. Alexander: Well, I would not say filibustering. I do not know what he was trying to do except criticize this party because we have had the nerve to stand up when we believe something is wrong and has to be questioned. With all he had to say, he left me with but one thought, and that