

Supply

Federal Energy Regulatory Commission in the United States, commonly known as FERC. FERC, like the NEB is a quasi-judicial body, which is not accountable, in the same way as the National Energy Board is not accountable, to the administration in the United States for its decisions.

My good friend, the Hon. Member for Algoma, asks when the Government is going to pass legislation—and listen to this carefully, Madam Speaker—in this House of Commons to overrule the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission in the United States, in other words, a ruling which is made in the United States with its regulatory board on the transport of natural gas, which disallows federal producers in western Canada or gas producers to pass the transportation costs on to the user in the United States, thus interfering—and we acknowledge that it interferes—with our regulatory commission here.

When will the Opposition understand that we have made all sorts of representations to the federal administration and that we are also encouraging the producers in western Canada to take the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission to court? I understand there is a court case in process. When will the Opposition understand that the consumers and buyers in the United States are as concerned as we are because they feel that it demeans the United States position in the world trade market?

The Hon. Member also interprets the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources as saying that energy is not a job creation activity. I am sure that the Hon. Member would not want to leave a misconception with Members of the House that the Minister of Energy (Mr. Masse) said that energy should not be treated as a job-creation project. Energy should be treated as a national priority and projects should not go ahead just to create jobs. I think that is sensible.

● (1600)

I want to repeat once more something about investment in western Canada—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Champagne): The Hon. Member may want to allow the Hon. Member for Algoma (Mr. Foster) to answer some of his questions. One half of the 10-minute question and comment period has already elapsed.

Mr. Foster: Madam Speaker—

Mr. Shields: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I think it is clear in the Standing Orders that this time can be used to ask questions or to make comments. While I had the floor I thought that I would be able to continue with my last question, which was a very short one.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Champagne): I think the Hon. Member will understand that earlier when there were six minutes left in the question and comment period the Hon. Member took up the whole period of time. In all fairness at this point in time, now that more than half the time of the

question and comment period has elapsed, I think it would be only fair to allow the Hon. Member for Algoma to answer some of the questions raised.

Mr. Foster: Madam Speaker, I was pleased to hear the Parliamentary Secretary not take responsibility for this debacle with respect to the decision of the United States regulatory agency. Last fall, when the Government refused to provide assistance to Syncrude, the Parliamentary Secretary became the fall guy and took full responsibility for that. We have not seen such a charade repeated here today. But we have heard the Government say that it is helpless and that it really cannot do anything. The Prime Minister wrote a desperate letter just a matter of hours before he went to Red Deer to stand in front of the television cameras and in front of the oil rig to say that he had written to the President of the United States asking him to take action on this upcoming FERC decision.

What I think is important for the Parliamentary Secretary to remember is that we are a sovereign nation. We can pass laws concerning the National Energy Board or other legislation applicable to Canadian producers of natural gas.

Mr. Shields: Like the national energy policy.

Mr. Foster: I assume the Hon. Member believes in having the National Energy Board. The board has the ability to establish prices and rates.

It was a matter of a few weeks after the Government abandoned the border pricing mechanism that the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission moved in to disallow a good portion of the transportation charges which formed part of a signed agreement. I am sure the Government has not even inquired yet about the possibility of bringing in legislation under the National Energy Board Act to strengthen our position with respect to the \$400 million which essentially stole away the entire funds allocated for exploration and development about which the Government made a lot of ballyhoo. It said that it would bring in a program of incentives for exploration and development which would cost \$350 million. It did this after the Premier of Alberta threatened to split the federal and provincial Parties. If he had done that it would have been split three ways. I say that because part of the Party out in Vancouver is forming a new political Party, and then we have the provincial PC Party and the federal—

Mr. Shields: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. My hon. friend has digressed considerably from answering anything on the energy question. He is now starting to talk about political Parties. I think that if he is going to answer the question, he should do so. He should not waste the time of the House.

Mr. Foster: Madam Speaker, I was just pointing out that the exploration development program which was requested last fall was only brought in by the Government when the Premier