

Canada Oil and Gas Act

capital for interest and investment. However, when a provision such as this is placed in a bill whereby one can retroactively back into an oil play, I believe that we will no longer be able to claim the esteem that we had before. Even if a certain amount, under the back-in provision, is paid back as described in the bill, the government has forgotten that there is much more to it than a basic payment under that back-in provision. I liken it to the situation when somebody expropriates your land in order to build a highway. You have a house on this land, but the land is expropriated. You are not paid anything for the trees that you have planted, the lawn that you have cultivated, or the many improvements you have made to the house before expropriation. Somehow there is a belief that everything goes along with the land. This same principle is placed in this bill. That is why the retroactivity, no matter how it is put together, is basically a confiscation and not the kind of legislation that will retain trust in this nation. I cannot say it any better than have some of my colleagues when they talked about the devastating effect this program was having on our economy. It is counterproductive. On the one hand we have high interest rates in order to attract capital into the country to assist our Canadian dollar. On the other hand, we have a policy which discourages and chases capital out of Canada. We also have a government that is using billions of dollars of taxpayers' money and encouraging Canadian companies to buy foreign controlled companies. That sort of thing does not bring us any more oil. It only chases capital out of the country.

● (2030)

Those are some of the reasons why I feel so strongly about this amendment. It is an option that should be seriously considered by members of this House. It is an option of basic philosophy about the way we forge ahead and govern this country in the future. I am surprised, not at the New Democratic Party because I can understand them, but at the fact that the Liberal Party would accept this kind of clause in a bill without amendment as a blueprint for the future of our country and the way to establish our goals for the enterprise that will go on in the future.

Mr. Bill McKnight (Kindersley-Lloydminster): Mr. Speaker, I take pleasure in having the opportunity to say a few words on the amendment contained in Motion No. 21 in the name of the hon. member for Etobicoke Centre (Mr. Wilson). It is not something new to our party to find ourselves defending rights and freedoms time and time again. This time we find ourselves defending the principle of fairness that I thought all Canadians believed in, whether they are Liberals or whether they are New Democrats. Canadians are known throughout the world as being fair-minded, tough, strong and energetic people. But when we see a government expressing less than fairness in its motions and bills, it is incumbent upon all Canadians to object, not just Canadians on this side of the House, but also those who sit on the government benches whom I know to be fair-minded men and women. They represent Canadians in constituencies across Canada who are fair-minded and have elected fair-minded people.

The hon. member for Etobicoke Centre moved that Clause 27 be amended by striking out lines 36 to 42 at page 15 and lines 1 and 2 on page 16 in Bill C-48 and that the following be substituted:

"(2) Her Majesty in right of Canada is hereby vested with and the minister on her behalf shall hold a share sufficient to render the interest holder with a Canadian ownership rate of fifty per cent".

We have absolutely no disagreement that Canadians should own 50 per cent of their energy resources. I would have no disagreement if a statement were made by the government that Canadians should own 100 per cent of their resources. But I do not think any Canadian would say that he or she wanted to confiscate from someone in good faith and in good conscience that which they have developed.

We can look at the ability of our people who have worked and sweated for the last 114 years, using their initiative because they had the will, the strength and the belief that this country is one of the best countries in the world. I do not think anyone in this House would dispute that. Fifty per cent ownership is a great goal. One hundred per cent ownership is a better goal. But confiscation and allowing the government to back in to lands that have been developed, surveyed and seismographed, and lands in which hundreds of millions of dollars have been invested searching for oil that ended up being dry holes is not fair-minded. These companies that have invested money in dry holes are companies owned by Canadians. Many Canadians have shares in American-owned companies. Therefore, why penalize Canadians who are trying to Canadianize the oil industry? I ask the government, why does it want people who have invested their savings in an American company to suffer because the government says it is the right of this government to have 25 per cent of it?

I want to comment briefly about Petro-Canada. I understand that a PetroCan station opened up over the weekend. There was a service station in the same location before. The sign may have changed now. Although there was a Petrofina station there, people were selling gas and making a livelihood out of operating the station. It was not Petro-Canada who gave them that right. They had their livelihood before. What the government did was to buy an existing gas station. Petro-Canada, since its inception, has not found any more oil than some of the very junior oil companies in Saskatchewan. All that it has done is to use taxpayers' funds to purchase something that already exists. We find that with this amendment the government will not even have to use taxpayers' funds to make a purchase. It will back-in and confiscate something that did not belong to it. The government did not pay for it in the first place.

An hon. Member: Why are you buying time?

Mr. McKnight: I hear some noise from the left rump of the party over there.

An hon. Member: The little red rump.