

companies dealing and negotiating with Mexico in respect of Mexican crude oil long before the minister and Mr. Hopper popped up in Mexico on this deal.

An hon. Member: You mean popped down.

Mr. Lawrence: Yes, you are right, popped down. I am glad to be corrected. As I hope the minister knows, some of these negotiations were well on the way to a final deal in respect of both delivery and price when the minister and his PetroCan officials turned up, or turned down, and this completely threw these negotiations and timetables out. If the minister is now advising Canadian companies to deal directly with Venezuela, why is he suggesting or, as a matter of fact, almost insisting that the state oil enterprise be inserted in the middle of the Mexican deal?

Surely to goodness now that PetroCan is diversified, has reached out and enlarged itself so that it now encompasses a very diversified corporation in the Canadian energy picture, and there is no question about that, if the minister inserts that state oil trading corporation in the middle of these complex negotiations, PetroCan itself will allocate unto itself, or there is that danger, major portions of the oil that might become available in time. If PetroCan is given the authority to act as a broker or wholesaler in respect of these negotiations, and the minister knows that brokers and wholesalers charge fees and commissions, I have no doubt that PetroCan would follow that course of action. If PetroCan did follow this useless intervention, to my mind consumers' costs would go up.

An hon. Member: What do you think Exxon is doing?

Mr. Lawrence: I have just heard an intervention from another minister, asking what I think Exxon is doing. Exxon is a perfect example of what I mean. The minister may believe that Exxon should not be in the middle of these negotiations. I might agree with him that there is no question about that, but I say to the minister that perhaps if some of us on this side of the House were clothed with his authority and were receiving the pay cheques that he has for doing some of this work he has not been doing, we would know these facts and maybe the situation would have been changed long before this.

By no stretch of the imagination do I want that minister, the hon. member for Ontario (Mr. Cafik), misinterpreting our position to the effect that we are saying the Exxon intervention is a good one, because we do not believe that. We still believe that if Exxon should not be in the middle of these deals there is no reason Petro-Canada should be in the middle of these deals either.

● (2130)

Mr. Broadbent: Who should?

Mr. Lawrence: It is as simple as that. Certainly the companies themselves are able to contract and negotiate on their own. They were doing it in the case of Mexico before the minister came along.

Energy Supplies

The minister now says that in respect of Venezuela they should do it. The record is one of not only a lack of competence in policies and programs, but there is also a lack of credibility in the minister himself. I believe that the dates, information and references which were available in the minister's department should certainly indicate to the House and to the public at large that if this minister did not know the facts, if he did not know the dates, if he did not know the details of those diversions, then he darned well should have, and there is no question in my mind about that.

The record of this government with respect to matters such as this is not very good, especially when it comes to its record of attempting to go out of its way to raise fear, apprehension, and perhaps even confrontation with those partners in confederation, the provinces, in an area of provincial authority and jurisdiction.

Before the bill was introduced in 1974, which was rushed through this House, there had been no prior consultation with the provinces. A bill, with as far-reaching consequences as had the bill of 1974, was brought into this House without any prior consultation whatever with the provinces. That bill died in the middle of 1976. The predecessor to this particular minister was very well aware that there were large areas of doubt and strong opinions in provincial jurisdictions, some of which at that time were run by the same party as the minister and his predecessor. Very strong opinions were held by the provincial authorities that the bill of 1974 was not the way to tackle the problem of international allocation.

What has happened here today and on Friday is that the minister is introducing a duplicate bill.

Mr. Gillespie: Are you going to vote against it?

Mr. Lawrence: Once again there was no consultation whatever, prior to the introduction of this bill in the House last Friday, with any of the provincial authorities with respect to its terms or its jurisdiction of authority. I think that is despicable and, certainly, the minister well knows now that I think some of the provisions in this bill and that some of the things which have been said by his colleagues have caused a very real concern in provincial and industrial circles. Probably the comments of most concern have been the rather lighthearted but terrible implications with respect to the matters of hydro electric power, coal mining, and sources of energy alternative to petroleum products.

To put it mildly, the ham-handed operation of this particular minister coming in as he has with this particular bill has certainly made the provinces apprehensive, and quite justifiably so, about the large degree of power which this government is now attempting to saw off, in the minds of some of these provinces, from an area which is strictly of provincial jurisdiction. Certainly there may well be room for people to believe that under the guise of an almost self-inflicted domestic crisis in respect of oil supplies in this country, this minister is again following the old federal, Liberal party dictum of attempting to grab more power under the guise of attempting to solve a problem of which they themselves were the authors.