

Energy

temporary government, that if they are to make a reasonable and proper request they had better send a copy to the opposition or the request will never see the light of day.

I want to deal for a minute with the specificity of those requests. They were reasonable requests from petrochemical companies which used crude oil as their feedstock, and in particular, petrochemical companies which produce fibres for textiles which end up in clothing. Anyone who has been in this House in the last few months or years recognizes that this portion of Canadian industry is in dire straits. The fibre and textile industry in Canada is sick. There are hundreds of lay-offs, companies are closing down, and it is a sector of our economy which is in a very precarious position at the moment.

I am led to believe by some of the companies involved that the effect of this levy will be to make their feedstocks more expensive than the feedstocks of competing companies, primarily those operating on the gulf coast of the United States. It seems to me reasonable and proper for the government to examine closely the submissions of these companies in order to ensure that, through this act, they are not driving them over the ledge to where they can no longer compete and so must those close down.

In view of the fact that the Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce (Mr. Horner) has imposed a quota on imports, that the sickness of the industry caused the government of Quebec to remove the sales tax on textiles entirely, and that there is such great unemployment in the textile areas of the country, surely it behooves a responsible government to examine these submissions. It chose not to do so, however. It chose first, not to inform the committee of them. Only through prying was I able to determine that the government was aware of them and had received them. Instead, it chose to remove this clause entirely, thereby precluding the possibility of those industries gaining exemption from this extra tax at this time. The government has a majority. It has every right to do that, but let it be responsible for that action. Let the public be aware that we on this side of the House are endeavouring to ensure that our textile industry is not hurt further through any action on our part. The government precluded that possibility and chose to pursue that line. Presumably it will have to live with the results.

As I indicated, Mr. Speaker, we are in favour of the principle of this bill. We recognize that the government signed an agreement with Syncrude which guaranteed it world prices for its production, which will start within days. We therefore wish the bill to go through with dispatch. However, we are most upset and annoyed at the details of the legislation and the ministerial discretion that is granted. This is a continuation of a trend which must lead to parliament passing one bill which says, in effect, that the government shall do whatever it wants—full stop. If we do that we need no longer worry about legislation. That would give ministers all the discretion they need. That seems to be their goal, when one examines the way in which legislation is drafted and the types of clauses in the legislation presented to us.

We hope and trust there will be a change when this party assumes power. We will have an opportunity to put in place wiser and more intelligent legislation to deal with the ongoing questions of handling Canada's heavy oil and tar sands production.

Any careful examination of Canada's energy situation indicates that we will need enhanced production from tar sands and of heavy oil. These represent enormous potential reserves to which we must have access if we are to achieve our goal of energy self-sufficiency and self-reliance, thereby reducing reliance on energy imported from the politically unstable Middle East and reducing our horrendous trade imbalance. We can only bring on stream the production of crude oil from the tar sands and from the heavy oils if there are clear rules which indicate to potential investors what prices, royalties, taxation, rules and regulations they can expect. Without those rules there would be a ridiculous situation.

We know that Shell Oil Company is interested in establishing a tar sands plant, with several partners. Two or three other companies are involved, and so are the government of Alberta and the federal government. We have a situation where we are trying to put together a business deal involving the investment of \$3 billion or \$4 billion, three or four companies, and two levels of government. Contemplate for a moment the difficulty of trying to arrive at a decision in a circumstance like that. The only one to benefit from that kind of arrangement is Air Canada, with officials and high priced lawyers flying from Edmonton to Ottawa, back to Edmonton, to Calgary, to Toronto, to Ottawa, and round and round, trying to find out the rules so they can make a decision.

● (1612)

Talk to those in Ottawa and they say, "Talk to those in Edmonton." Talk to those in Edmonton, and they say to go and see those in Ottawa. You talk to your partners, and they say, "Don't talk to us about investment until you know what are the rules." Round and round it goes. It is a totally non productive activity, an activity which gains for the Canadian economy absolutely nothing. It certainly does not hasten the day when this new tar sands plant comes on line, Canadians get access to the production, and we reduce our reliance on imported crude oil. It makes me laugh, Mr. Speaker.

The Minister of State (Small Business) (Mr. Abbott) says that he is appalled at the cost of the paperwork burden and bureaucracy. He says it costs the economy \$1 billion a year. He said the government is going to do something about it by appointing a "comptroller of paperwork burden", or whatever he calls it. On the other hand we have a minister, through indifference or incompetence, imposing a bureaucratic structure the cost of which will certainly be in the tens of millions of dollars. The ultimate cost of putting together the paperwork for this next Syncrude plant will at least be of that order of magnitude by the time all the details are arranged. That is an appalling way to run a country. It is an appalling way to run a business or anything else.