

*Petroleum Statistics***GOVERNMENT ORDERS**

[English]

PETROLEUM CORPORATIONS MONITORING ACTMEASURE TO PROVIDE FOR COLLECTION OF CERTAIN
STATISTICS RELATING TO PETROLEUM INDUSTRY

The House resumed, from Friday, January 27, consideration of the motion of Mr. Gillespie that Bill C-12, to require the reporting of certain financial and other statistics relating to the affairs of certain petroleum companies carrying on business in Canada, be read the second time and referred to the Standing Committee on National Resources and Public Works.

Mr. Harvie Andre (Calgary Centre): Mr. Speaker, as I indicated in my very short remarks last Friday when this bill was initially called for second reading, I will not be taking up a great deal of the time of the House.

● (1512)

We have no serious quarrel with the intent of this bill. As I said when I last spoke on this subject, we question the reason for its introduction because it is our understanding that the information which the government is seeking to acquire through this legislation is in fact already available and is forthcoming on a voluntary basis. We wonder why the whip is being brought in while the carrot is working adequately.

It is our intention to allow the bill to go to committee though we have a number of reservations with regard to specifics, in particular the clause which would allow the minister at his discretion, should he deem it to be in the public interest, to release some of the confidential information gathered as a result of the application of this law, provided its release would not seriously hurt the competitive position of the company concerned. We find it unacceptable that discretionary power of this kind should be given to a minister; we wonder whether the next step will be to give the Minister of National Revenue (Mr. Guay) the power to release details of tax returns filed by individuals.

We question the structure of the clause. The phrases "if in the public interest" and "provided the position of the company is not adversely affected" are difficult to reconcile. Our view is that if disclosure is in the public interest, that should end the matter. The clause is poorly drafted and should not be there in its present form.

Another thing we object to is the "break and entry" clause which would allow officials, at the discretion of the minister, to seize files and documents of companies affected by the legislation. We find such "Gestapo" clauses totally unacceptable and out of keeping with the atmosphere which should prevail in our society.

One last point. I recall that during the debate leading up to the incorporation of Petro-Canada, one of the main reasons given by the government for establishing that corporation was that it needed a window on the industry. Spokesmen opposite argued that the government needed to know more about the

[Mr. Speaker.]

industry and its affairs, and that the establishment of an operating company would make this possible. Well, Mr. Speaker, looking at the bill before us which would compel the industry to provide certain information to the government, one can only reach the conclusion that either Petro-Canada is providing no information at all or that the glass in that window is awfully dirty. If that observation is correct, then in the light of the arguments put forward when Petro-Canada was established, one can only assume the Liberal party will have no objection when we seek to remove the government's involvement in this oil corporation.

One last word. We intend to add a "sunset clause" to this legislation since the government has omitted to do so. We agree with the policy favoured by the cabinet, that of getting out of the business of pricing oil and gas eventually, and ceasing to involve ourselves in the day to day operations of the industry. In keeping with this philosophy we see no long term need for a bill such as this, so the clause we shall be proposing in committee is that the act should cease to be enforced after June, 1983, unless the government of the day wishes to take affirmative action at that time to sustain it for an additional five-year period. We do not think this is unreasonable. The government has all the flexibility in the world to extend the date if the situation requires it. On the other hand, under our proposal the economy would not be burdened in perpetuity with one more agency, one more level of bureaucracy costing the taxpayers money and imposing an added strain on the economy.

We shall be seeking from the minister in committee some estimate as to the cost of this program. Every time governments introduce measures like this affecting any aspect of Canadian business, a cost is associated. It is estimated that in Canada the cumulative cost of this sort of interference is a sum in the order of \$5 billion to \$6 billion. I believe it is time we started to cut back. It is time we began to limit this type of interference with the activities of Canadian business, especially small business which finds government bureaucracy and regulation a serious handicap to growth. We do not intend to vote against the bill on second reading, but we shall be putting forward in committee proposals for improvements and we trust the government will be amenable to these suggestions.

Mr. T. C. Douglas (Nanaimo-Cowichan-The Islands): Mr. Speaker, the purpose of this measure, Bill C-12, is to make it mandatory upon the petroleum industry to provide the government with all the information necessary to ascertain whether the additional revenues they are receiving from rising prices are being reinvested in exploration and development in Canada.

After five years of rising oil and gas prices we do not need any further information in order to answer the question: are the oil and gas companies' profits being reinvested to find new sources of supply? On the basis of all the figures readily available it is clear that the answer is a resounding "No".

The facts are indisputable. The petroleum industry has not increased its expenditures on exploration and development in Canada at a rate commensurate with the tremendous revenues