

what we know about the committee. We do not know very much about it. It is neither heard directly nor seen clearly. Why, some cabinet ministers are not even able to name their representatives on the committee.

Mr. Blenkarn: At least four of them.

Mr. MacKay: This applies to at least four of them. Again, one wonders what is going on and if the government really knows.

Mr. Blenkarn: You know the government doesn't know.

Mr. MacKay: My hon. friend from Mississauga (Mr. Blenkarn) says that the government does not know. I accept his suggestion but I hope he is wrong. I hope the government knows what is going on because, after all, it is our government. It would be a sad commentary on Canada if the government really were as incompetent as it now appears. I hope for all our sakes that it is not.

An energy crisis has been proclaimed. However, as inflation will soon increase by almost double, if the rise in December is at all significant, and as food prices have increased by 18 per cent, it is evident that there is a crisis. I suggest, however, that the crisis is a governmental and credibility crisis rather than an energy crisis. I believe the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources is determined, and well he should be, to take steps for curing the problem in so far as those steps lie within his power. He realizes, I think, that we need a national power grid in this country. I hope he will bend every effort in making sure that such a national power grid is built and that the blanks in our energy picture are filled in. He will encounter enormous problems in this regard and it is unfair to expect him to cure these overnight. I believe he is making a sincere attempt to do something.

I wish that in his statement the Prime Minister could have indicated what tangible steps are being taken to build a pipeline. Does the government not realize that rights-of-way must be acquired, surveys done and expropriations carried out? How is the pipeline to be built? Will it be built on a cost plus basis, or otherwise? Will it be built by a consortium from the private sector, or is the government going to build it? How will this be done? It would be reassuring to know if the Minister of Supply and Services (Mr. Goyer) has made sure that there will be enough steel for the pipeline. Concrete action would reassure the people of Canada more than high-sounding announcements. I trust that the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources, who has been under a lot of strain and a lot of fire lately, will bring forward something concrete and, will, either in the committee or in the House, reassure the people of Canada that something tangible is being done and not just being talked about.

It would be encouraging if the Minister of Finance would bring forward positive proposals, as the hon. member for Qu'Appelle-Moose Mountain (Mr. Hamilton) suggested in a recent speech, for giving fast write-offs to companies and individuals erecting storage facilities so that we can have at least a 90-day oil supply in eastern Canada, instead of literally wondering where next month's fuel is to come from.

Energy Supplies Emergency Act

It is evident that if any board of directors or any executive of any labour union in Canada had gone before the shareholders, or before the rank and file and presented the sorry record of performance which this government has presented to the people of Canada, that board of directors or that executive would be turfed out so fast that they would not even be given the chance to say, "Thank you for giving us the privilege of serving you."

If the government is sincere in wanting to cure our problems, if it will give assurances that when this bill is sent to committee it will be receptive to constructive suggestions and sound amendments from Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition, if it does not appropriate unto itself, at the expense of the provinces and the people of this country, more power than it actually needs for dealing with the crisis for which the government itself is responsible, it will not find it difficult to get the support of most members of this House.

Mr. Jack Murta (Lisgar): Mr. Speaker, I do not intend to take my full time in speaking on Bill C-236. I just wish to make a few comments. First I wish to discuss some of the inequities which I see evident in the bill and then I shall turn to what I consider possibly a more important question, the over-all world situation as it relates to energy and to food. I say that because food and energy are interrelated questions. Then I shall refer to what may happen if the present Liberal government does not make any effort to do any long-range planning with regard to the situation in Canada.

In our discussion of Bill C-236 we must first ask ourselves this question, "Is there really an energy crisis in Canada at this time?" because that is really what the government asks us to decide. I submit that Bill C-236 is premised on the belief that Canada has a serious national energy crisis. It appears this way, certainly. While it is undoubtedly true that Canada is experiencing regional supply shortfalls of Arab oil and imported products, it is also true that much of the country is not faced with an energy crisis similar to the crisis in the United States, parts of Europe and Japan.

While the Middle East dispute undoubtedly accelerated some domestic price characteristics, many of the aspects of Canada's crisis have their roots in longstanding domestic problems which have been brought on by the present government. The principal cause, therefore, of our crisis today—if it can be termed a crisis—is not Arab cutoffs or oil embargoes but lack of federal leadership in anticipating and settling problems in an orderly and co-ordinated manner.

For example, in March this year the government stated that it saw no need for a pipeline to Montreal. By June, when the government energy "non-policy" as it has been called, was tabled, this pipeline was about the third priority. Yet on September 4, the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) announced the decision to build such a pipeline. Now, over two months since that announcement, nothing has been done, no plans have been announced and the project may yet be delayed because there may be a lack of steel and other commodities which are needed for building this pipeline which is essential if Canada is to meet its total energy requirements. As I have said, we are not even sure at present if we can get the necessary steel piping. Accord-