

Energy Supplies Emergency Act

Finally, I want to point out something which I did some days ago in another context with respect to this bill. When I first read it, I was struck by the fact—and I approve of it, I say this quite frankly—that everything under the bill is really done by the government and not by the board. Everything that the board is to do is to be done only by approval of the governor in council, which means, in plain English, approval of the government or by initiation of the government.

Unlike many other agencies, this allocation board is not given independent powers. Its power is under constant control and supervision of the government. Naturally, I would feel a little happier if I thought this government was on its toes a great deal more often than it is, but it is a fact that of course it is the government that will be responsible for the work of this board, and the government will be responsible to parliament and to the people of Canada. There is not a single function that the board is to perform under this bill that is to be performed independently, except for pure administration. All the important functions, whether it is the declaration of an emergency, or the allocation program or changes in it, or anything else, that the board is to do is to be done under the authority and on the approval of the governor in council.

Therefore, I think that on the whole the structure of this bill is good. It is unfortunate that one should ever have to take steps to do away with the normal procedures and safeguards that people in a society have, but these steps are to be taken only in the case of an emergency; and I am sure everyone here agrees that is something that should be done.

May I say, finally, that I heard a number of my friends in the Conservative Party say this is a terrible bill, that in their view there is no emergency and there cannot be one. Therefore, I think that the motion which they have moved to change things in the bill flows from the basic opposition to this kind of bill. I do not agree with that. I do not agree with them that in the present international situation it is prudent, sensible or wise for any member of this parliament to say that he is confident there will not be an emergency a month or two from now, or a year or two from now, with respect to the energy needs of any section of this country or any institution in this country. I think it is most unwise, no matter what one's ideological approach may be, for anyone to say that there will not be an emergency, that he knows it, he has it straight from God, which means in some cases straight from the mouth of the multinational oil corporations.

Anybody who starts from that premise will keep on saying that this is a terrible bill, that we do not need it, that there will not be an emergency and that we will try to find ways and means of frustrating the intentions of the bill a little here and a little there. So far as I and my colleagues are concerned, we do not go for that. We have said for many months, indeed many years, that to have left the future of the people of this nation, with respect to their energy needs, in the hands of multinational corporations, and to have sold out petroleum resources to these corporations, was a disservice to the people of Canada and the future of our country. We are paying for that now.

If, at long last, this government takes steps to give itself the power to deal with an emergency if one should occur,

[Mr. Lewis.]

then all of us who hope that such an emergency will not come about should support the idea of being prepared for it should it ever come as a result of action over which we may not have control. I repeat what I said some days ago, that there is some inconsistency in members of this House making statements about the failure of this government and other governments to protect the interests of Quebec and the Atlantic provinces, and then trying to frustrate the purposes of a bill which may be necessary precisely to assist the eastern part of this country which is dependent upon offshore oil.

● (2220)

There you are, Mr. Speaker. I said there are some members who know directly from some source. The hon. member for Calgary South (Mr. Bawden), I am sure, knows a great deal about the oil industry.

An hon. Member: Give us your facts.

Mr. Lewis: The facts we are dealing with now show that there is an international situation that threatens the possibility of an emergency facing the people of Canada. If the hon. member for Calgary South, through his association with the heads of the multinational corporations throughout the world, can give us a firm and sacred undertaking that his friends at no time during the next two or three years will create an emergency for the people of Canada, I will not believe him—but at least he would be saying something!

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Lewis: The fact is, Mr. Speaker, that this bill does not come into effect unless there is a national emergency. It would be imprudent, unwise and irresponsible for this House not to make sure that if such an emergency occurs there is power to deal with it.

Mr. G. W. Baldwin (Peace River): Mr. Speaker, I admire the hon. member for York South (Mr. Lewis) and I appreciate his comments about me. In the last part of his speech, however, he outlined the basic difference in our philosophy. I sometimes shudder at the way in which members of his party, the government people and a lot of people in Canada react the minute there is the slightest whiff of an emergency and long before there is any real appearance of an emergency. The hon. member should cast his mind back to October, 1970, and the things that he said then which are equally applicable today. But they rush forward and say, "Let us give this government more power": they heap power on their shoulders and give them the authority to do everything.

When I see the government ask for that power, Mr. Speaker, I get worried. When I hear the hon. member for York South say, "Let them have that power, and even more power", I am worried. When I hear the government and the hon. member for York South, joined by the multinational oil companies say, "Give the government that power", I get very worried. When I think of the hon. member for York South in concert with the multinational oil companies, I wonder why the multinational oil companies say they want this bill—