

Oil and Petroleum

adjourned for July and August, the minister would have known about the trends since May or June. It does not become an emergency. Even if an emergency did occur, it would not be the first time parliament was recalled. For the past few years with this government we have been recalled pretty well every year to come to grips with some problem between management and labour. We end strikes as though we were an arbitration board.

If we put on a time limit of two days' debate you have that protection valve. Parliament has two days in which to express itself. Consumers could read in the newspapers, hear over the radio, or see on television whether there was a crisis. We saw the government implement the War Measures Act. We never did get all the facts, and there was a resolution that died on the order paper, but we know today that there probably never was a crisis.

This party is not only concerned about the price of crude petroleum and its products, but also about the price of other products. We are establishing a dangerous precedent. According to clauses 46, 21 and 22, if you do not have an agreement with the provinces, the federal government can come along with a big club and set the price. What kind of conference can you have if the provinces sit down with the federal government, the Prime Minister, and the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources, when the government has clause 36 up its sleeve? Cabinet can make a proclamation and, whether the provinces agree or not, the government will just run slipshod over the whole thing. How can you have any consensus or meaningful conference with that kind of legislation? That is the point.

I ask the minister to be reasonable. We are being reasonable this afternoon. I ask him to agree to this and set two days. We will then expedite this legislation which the minister thinks he needs, and which I think the country may need in the future.

Mr. Macdonald (Rosedale): Mr. Chairman, the hon. member talks about a conference not being meaningful if one party can in effect take this action and put up the price. That is the kind of situation we now have. We have been operating under that kind of threat for the past 18 months to two years with regard to pricing in Canada. For example, the Premier of Alberta said, "No more gas for our consuming provinces in this country unless I get the price I want". That is the kind of threatening situation under which we have been operating. It is on the basis of that we have come to parliament to get this kind of authority.

I again go back to my proposition. The hon. member is really arguing for the provincial veto. I am saying on the contrary that the ultimate responsibility on a national issue of this kind should be taken by the national parliament.

Mr. Gillies: By the government or parliament?

Mr. Macdonald (Rosedale): By the government under legislation passed by this parliament. We are prepared to consider other procedures. The amendment put by the hon. member for Don Valley is not acceptable. If hon. members would like to stand the question, we are prepared to consider that. If they would like to put this to a question now, we are equally prepared to have a decision on it.

[Mr. Woolliams.]

Mr. Woolliams: Mr. Chairman, I wish to reply to the minister. He talks about arguing a provincial veto. I am not arguing for any provincial veto. I am not defending any provincial government. We are dealing with federal legislation. I say to the minister that setting the price where there is no agreement cannot be approved unless it is brought before parliament and we have two days debate on it. Surely the minister can see that is a safeguard on a government running slipshod over parliament and the people of Canada. I am not just talking about Liberal governments. Any government is capable of doing that. The minister knows that.

We are simply asking for something reasonable. The minister wants to get this legislation through. This afternoon we are handing it to him on a platter. The minister seems to have the mental makeup that he cannot say yes. I say the minister should listen to one particular song from the show "Oklahoma!". I say we are not arguing for a veto. I ask the minister to give consideration to this, say yes, and let's get on with the job.

Mr. Macdonald (Rosedale): Mr. Chairman, I wonder if the hon. member for Calgary North realizes he would have to amend his colleague's proposition in this regard. Is he moving a subamendment?

Mr. Woolliams: My colleague would be willing to do that. We can do this by consent. We on this side agree. I think the minister's colleagues want to agree with it. It is only the minister who is saying no. Will the minister agree to the two days if they are included in that amendment? If he agrees to that, we will get on with the job.

Mr. Macdonald (Rosedale): Mr. Chairman, for the reasons I have indicated I do not think the country should be held up in this way. I would be prepared to consider another procedure, but not that one.

Mr. Schumacher: Mr. Chairman, the minister could very well have listened to the suggestion of the hon. member for Calgary North. I feel the hon. member for Calgary North is being a bit generous today. In fact, I am happy his offer was not taken up and I do not have to feel bound by it.

The attitude of the minister indicates how careful we should be in giving to him and his government this very powerful tool to interfere with the constitution of the country. The hon. member for Calgary North stated he was not arguing the provincial side. I suggest this party is not doing that. We are arguing the constitutional side of this question which is much more fundamental than any particular province or part of the country. If the British North America Act is going to be abrogated by Bill C-32, a certain amount of consideration should be given to the consequence of this legislation.

● (1510)

I personally feel that the bill when passed—and no doubt it will be passed—will be found to be unconstitutional, and that other arrangements will have to be made. The basic premise, at least of division I, is that the federal government will exercise leadership in bringing the provinces together to agree on a price for oil and natural gas. This is a proper function for the federal government to