

Private Bills

extremely interested. I should like to relate some experiences that make me feel that if closer attention had been paid to previous bills appearing before the house certain difficulties which confront us today would not now exist. Furthermore, if we provide this close scrutiny we may be able to avoid similar action in the future.

I have been receiving recently a tremendous number of complaints by consumers of natural gas. I grant you, Mr. Speaker, they are not in connection with this particular company or this particular pipe line, but I think there is great similarity between the two. What I want to demonstrate today are matters for which we should watch out while we have the responsibility of passing of bills of this sort in the house.

In the region from which I come there has been a tremendous and very unwarranted increase lately in gas bills. Therefore I proceeded to look into the matter to see what was causing it and I found that while everything was perfectly legal and aboveboard a very shady deal was being pulled off.

The information I got was that when this company received their original contract they contracted to supply a certain quality of gas to the consumers. I believe the figure was something like 1,000 b.t.u.'s per cubic foot of gas. During the period they were selling this gas and getting people to convert to gas they were shooting through something like 1,100 b.t.u.'s per cubic foot. After everybody had gone to the expense of converting to gas stoves, gas furnaces and so on the company then cut the gas back to the amount they originally contracted and guaranteed to carry. This may be quite legal so far as the supply of gas is concerned but so far as the sale of it is concerned it has been done under false pretenses. This is something that the members of this house should watch for when we consider such matters.

I am told, for example, that the profits of this particular gas company in the first six months of last year jumped 50 per cent. What is happening, of course, is that while the consumers are still paying the same price they were paying before they are not getting the same quality of gas and it does not perform the same function or serve the same purpose.

What happened after all this conversion had taken place and everybody had gone to the expense of installing gas furnaces, gas stoves, and so on, was that a plant was built

[Mr. Martin (Timmins).]

to extract butane and propane gas from the natural gas as it came through. This gas was sold at a handsome profit by the company which charged the same price for the gas they had previously charged. I am referring to Northern Ontario Gas which supplies the district from which I come. This is the sort of thing we have to examine very carefully, and it is the sort of thing we should try to prevent occurring in the future. I am wondering, Mr. Speaker, whether we have a quorum at the present time.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Under the Standing Orders of this house, if any member brings to the attention of the Speaker that there is not a quorum present the members in the house are to be counted. I shall therefore ask the Second Clerk Assistant to count the house.

And on the count being made, more than 20 members were declared to be present.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I declare the house properly formed. The hon. member for Timmins.

Some hon. Members: Shame.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I should point out to the house that the remarks just made are out of order. Members of this chamber may leave or enter the chamber when the count is being made.

• (6:40 p.m.)

Mr. Martin (Timmins): Mr. Speaker, my opinion, which I have certainly expressed many times, is that it is a shame to take away the supper hour and to inconvenience the staff. I think that is one matter which should be looked into at the present time.

An hon. Member: Work harder.

Mr. Martin (Timmins): I think it is the privilege of any hon. member to call the attention of the house to the fact that if we can muster only 21 hon. members out of 265 we need to take another look at the idea of keeping the staff working during the supper hour.

An hon. Member: It is quality that counts.

Mr. Martin (Timmins): I did not hear the interjections. If hon. members have any questions to ask, I will be glad to answer them if I can.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please. I think it might be well for the house to get back to consideration of the business before it, which is the bill.

John J. ...