

*Energy Supplies Emergency Act*

sold out their provinces and sold out the people that they were supposed to represent.

● (2130)

**Mr. Blais:** I dare the hon. member to come to my riding and talk that nonsense.

**Mr. Baker:** We take the position that the tax system ought to be used to provide incentives for Canadians to build storage facilities. We do not believe the government should act in such a way as to be held to be admitting that its policies are subject to the whims of the international corporations.

You will recall, Mr. Speaker, a few days ago a new person strutted across the energy scene, a person called *force majeure*. Someone called me to ask whether he was a French-speaking army officer who was taking part in the crisis. A lot of Canadians did not know what it meant. But they got the hint when the minister told them that the largest oil shortfall could result from pro-rationing among multinational companies and that to do this the companies would have to enforce the *force majeure* clauses in the supply contracts. Canadians ask why should this be, and look to the government for answers. As usual, they receive none. Through subsequent questioning in the House of Commons by my leader and others, it became apparent that the Canadian government could not or would not challenge the right of the multinationals to allocate oil supplies arbitrarily. It came to light that the government was not only weak in policy but weak in resolve. When asked whether or not the minister or any of his officials had been in direct contact with these large oil companies or seen the supply contracts, the reply was: It is not our business. At this point Canadians began to think that perhaps the government was permitting a situation to develop in which the national government of Canada was subservient to the will of private international companies. Our view, Mr. Speaker, and I think it is the view of most Canadians, is that this is not a healthy situation and that the government has been derelict in its duty in this field as well.

There is to be a federal-provincial conference of first ministers on January 22, 1974. The Prime Minister has said they will be discussing the energy issue and it may well be that the conference will consider other matters affecting Canadians, such as the uncontrolled inflation which is itself causing concern and which, again, is being aggravated by the crisis in petroleum. This conference could prove to be one of the most important first ministers conferences since the practice of holding such meetings was begun. It might also be one of the most productive. It will all depend on the attitude of the participants. If the conference is to be used as an instrument to bludgeon the provincial governments it will surely fail. Although there may be a lot of strutting about and a lot of breast beating about national supremacy, our country will be the worse for that failure. Unfortunately, there is an atmosphere of confrontation in Canada and the federal government must take a substantial share of the blame for this. It should surely take a substantial share in an initiative to erase this attitude.

While it cannot be said that the ten provinces ought to regard themselves as ten sovereign states—and I do not think they do—it must be said that the federal govern-

[Mr. Baker.]

ment ought not to forget that the governments of the ten provinces are duly elected governments with mandates of their own. The people of those provinces are all Canadians and would not welcome, from either their provincial governments or from the federal government, any action, statement or position which would deprive them of the right to participate in a matter of national interest.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Order. I regret to interrupt the hon. member but the time allotted to him has expired. He may continue with unanimous consent. Is there unanimous consent?

**Some hon. Members:** No.

**Mr. Randolph Harding (Kootenay West):** Mr. Speaker, I am the first speaker for the New Democratic Party since early Friday morning, and I intend to be brief—

**Some hon. Members:** Filibuster.

**Mr. Harding:**—because we are hopeful that the bill may get through the House tonight. We have listened to an interesting debate on the energy supplies bill currently before us. The position taken by the NDP is that the House of Commons should give speedy passage to the legislation. The government should be given the powers required to cope with the present energy crisis but these powers should not be excessive. It would be completely irresponsible to break for a lengthy Christmas recess without dealing with this legislation.

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Harding:** If a crisis arises we must have the necessary measures in place to meet it and for this reason I strongly oppose the suggestion by the Conservative Party that the legislation be held up until the end of January. Why wait until the winter is half over before laying plans to forestall a possible energy crisis? The official opposition is using the same delaying tactics as it used in trying to block progressive legislation this past spring.

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Harding:** The people of Canada brought them to their senses at that time by reflecting in the public opinion polls growing disillusionment with their stalling tactics. I predict it will happen again, for the Canadian people expect parliament to prepare plans and measures to cope with the looming energy crisis. We cannot take a chance and wait until the end of January before making plans as proposed by the Tory party. The completely irresponsible position take by the official opposition shows that their concern is for the multinational oil corporations, not for the Canadian people.

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Harding:** Our group will offer some amendments to the legislation. We hope to see second reading completed quickly and the legislation sent to committee for immediate study and report. We urge the Conservative party to call off their apparent filibuster of the bill and to join with other parties in trying to set up the necessary machinery to cope with a possible energy crisis in our country.