

Canada Oil and Gas Act

Mr. Gilbert Parent (Welland): Mr. Speaker, I welcome this opportunity to engage in the debate on Bill C-48 because I believe that this bill, as much as any other we have seen since this Thirty-first Parliament opened, will affect all the people of Canada. Many issues are at present of concern to Canadians, not the least of which are the economy, inflation, and unemployment, and I recognize that each and everyone of us here is in some way affected.

In discussing the energy bill before us I have chosen to try to point out some of the underlying causes of the misunderstanding or the insensitivity of one region of this country with regard to another. I do not propose to use many figures and percentages, because I believe we have been almost figured to death by people like ourselves going out west and trying to show conclusively that our proposals are best for the whole of Canada, as well as by people coming from Alberta and telling us in their great ad campaigns that indeed their figures are the right ones. One fellow even made the ungracious comment that the guys in Ottawa are "nuts".

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Parent: I think that throwing such barbs back and forth is uncalled for, and I think it is time that we reasoned out the whole problem together. It is my feeling that the deliberations which have taken place between the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) and the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources (Mr. Lalonde) and their provincial counterparts, while receiving widespread coverage in the media, seem to be viewed by many Canadians as if they were some kind of a game of tug and pull. Pretty soon we will start engaging in political fisticuffs, if we have not reached that point yet. It appears that these fisticuffs will be observed by a captive audience which will be called immobile, freezing in the dark, or bankrupt, depending on the part of the nation from which they come.

As I mentioned before, it is my intention to bring a voice of understanding and calm into the loud rhetoric flying back and forth across our airwaves and, indeed, in this House. I propose in some small way to try to articulate my point of view of what the government is trying to do here for Canada as a whole, not only for people in the east, west or north of Canada, but on a global scale, and to try to achieve communality among Canadians.

Someone said that the needs of man to survive are probably fourfold. Food is one, shelter is another, warmth is the third, and love is the fourth. Ottawa has been involved in the first two for some time, that is, food and shelter. We have marketing boards to take care of our food, and we have the minister of housing taking care of our shelters. I see the minister in the House with us right now and I compliment him for the policies he has brought forth, because I think they are great policies.

I hope that the subject of love is not one which will provoke a debate as to whether it is the federal or provincial responsibility, because God help us if it is ever left for us only to decide.

Warmth is fast becoming part of the federal-provincial volleys because of the energy crisis which began in the 1970s. Ironically enough, this crisis started out in countries which, in the worst of times, have never had to worry about warmth. I refer here specifically to countries in the Middle East. In my opinion we do not have an energy crisis per se, similar to the crises being experienced, for example, in Japan, Turkey, Germany, or even by our neighbours to the immediate south. We have been assured and reassured that this nation holds within its boundaries sufficient natural resources to satisfy all our domestic needs, not necessarily in conventional oil but in natural coal, uranium, heavy oil, the tar sands, and our ever-growing tough technological capacity to find new energy producing and saving resources.

It was out in Alberta for some three weeks in the summer of 1979 because I wanted to see for myself just what we had in the area of natural resources, and I wanted to speak to the people involved in the production of oil in western Canada. I wanted to hear what they had to say, and I did. I went there not necessarily to preach the gospel, in the sense of the good news from the people of Ottawa and what we are doing, but I wanted to hear what they had to say. I wanted to see for myself what they were doing for their fellow citizens in Alberta, in the west, and their fellow citizens right across Canada.

• (1610)

Mr. Speaker, I was happy to note that these are hard-working people in the west. They ask no great favours of us. They asked for the chance to work and grow in this country. This is basically what all Canadians are asking for, a chance to work, to grow, and a chance to be a part of Canada. The more we become wrapped up in 10 per cent of this and 3 per cent of that, the more we lose sight of the fact that we are a nation joined together by common ideals and common goals. Those goals, I believe, are for the betterment of every man, woman and child in Canada. Our crisis, therefore, is not one of energy or of potential energy. Our crisis is one of the conflict, of disagreement and, in a good many cases, mea culpa for all of us. It is a case of insensitivity and misunderstanding.

The crux of the matter, of course, is the stand of the three major producing provinces and the federal government. These three provinces are considered to be what I will call "western Canada". They are in conflict with the stand of the federal government, which appears to me to be sometimes considered like a mythical fiefdom whose importance, authority, judgment, capabilities, ebb and flow, are based sometimes on how they are perceived by the provinces and their wishes and, yes, many times by their whims. To ensure fair, equitable, and reasonable access to the rest of the provinces which make up central Canada, the maritimes along with the territories, I believe we must develop a policy which is fair and equitable to the people of the producing provinces as well as to the people of the industrial heartland of Canada and, indeed, to all the consumers in all of the provinces. I include here the maritimes and the territories.