

Petro-Canada

persuasions, move directly into that segment of the energy field which deals with the production and distribution of hydro-electric power. We have also seen federal participation in the uranium and nuclear sector and some direct investment in a corporation which has been engaged in the petroleum and natural gas industry. I refer to the 45 per cent federal participation in Panarctic Oil.

The step now being taken by the federal government is most significant in that it will result in direct national involvement, through the formation of a major petroleum company, in the areas of exploration and development of petroleum and natural gas resources. In all likelihood it will also mean future federal government involvement in the acquisition of oil resources where there is a requirement to go outside Canadian borders in order to meet our national needs.

As I mentioned a few moments ago, I would like to draw attention to the need at this time for the federal government to make this kind of move. The official opposition party, both in this House and in committee, has made every possible attempt to downgrade this element of need. We have heard another indication of that from the hon. member for Calgary Centre, who of course was also very vocal on this point in committee. This need forms a cornerstone for the decision of the government to introduce Bill C-8 and proceed with the establishment of Petro-Canada.

The point has been made that private industry has managed in past years to provide Canadians with an adequate supply of oil and natural gas to meet both industrial and residential needs. The point has been made that with some adjustment in the area of taxation, this same private enterprise could be relied upon to meet future needs in much the same way. While it is entirely unlikely that members of the official opposition who have acted as key spokesmen on Bill C-8 will ever permit themselves to be convinced of the sound arguments which have been put forward by the minister and various government members in support of the concept of establishing a national presence in the oil and gas industry at this time, I think it is important that the public understands this need quite clearly.

I would simply like to elaborate on some of the aspects of this argument which have been so ably demonstrated by the minister in the past, with particular reference to the speech he made when introducing Bill C-8 at second reading some four months ago. It seems to me that once this question of need is clearly established in the minds of all Canadians, other detailed aspects of the bill—while most important in the technical and operating sense—become somewhat less critical in terms of the over-all concept.

In passing, I think it is perhaps significant to make some reference at this time to the highly successful Crown corporation which was established in my own province of Ontario in the early part of this century to handle the development and distribution of hydroelectric power in the province. I might add that Ontario had a Conservative government at the time. I am sure the members of the cabinet of that particular Conservative government in Ontario addressed themselves to this question of need and

[Mr. Martin.]

undoubtedly reached the same conclusions that the government in Ottawa reached in 1975.

This time we are considering the national picture as it applies to future production and development of oil and gas resources, both of which commodities were unknown at the time the Ontario Hydroelectric Power Commission was established. No doubt Sir Adam Beck and other founders of Ontario Hydro looked at the gigantic province of Ontario, reviewed its future potential and decided then and there that the kinds of financing, manpower and other physical resources required a government presence.

Having moved in at the very early stages of the development of hydroelectric power in the province of Ontario, that Conservative regime decided to control the industry in its entirety and no provision was permitted for private sector participation. I think most residents of Ontario would agree that over the years both industrial and residential needs in the area of electricity have been fairly well met by this particular Crown corporation, which has at all times remained a direct instrument of the provincial government of Ontario and has been mothered and nurtured by various Tory governments over the greater part of its life.

I make this reference because it strikes me as rather odd that the official opposition in Ottawa is unprepared to look upon the need for a national presence in an industry as basic to our society as oil and gas exploration and development, when its provincial counterpart in my own province of Ontario has considered such state intervention in an allied field as being so essential as to warrant, not partial control but 100 per cent control to the exclusion of all forms of private enterprise.

Mr. Speaker, may I call it five o'clock?

PROCEEDINGS ON ADJOURNMENT MOTION

[English]

SUBJECT MATTER OF QUESTIONS TO BE DEBATED

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Penner): It is my duty, pursuant to Standing Order 40, to inform the House that the questions to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment are as follows: the hon. member for Brandon-Souris (Mr. Dinsdale)—Indian Affairs—Withdrawal of vocational rehabilitation services from natives in Manitoba—Request for review and report; the hon. member for Winnipeg North (Mr. Orlikow)—Canadian Pacific Railway—Proposed lay-off of three thousand maintenance workers—Request for report; the hon. member for Humber-St. George's-St. Barbe (Mr. Marshall)—Food Prices Review Board—Report on fish prices—Possibility of reference to combines investigations branch.

It being five o'clock, the House will now proceed to the consideration of private members' business as listed on today's order paper, namely, public bills, private bills and notices of motions.