

Canada Oil and Gas Act

Another thing about this provision has bothered me for a long time, Mr. Speaker. At the beginning of my speech I mentioned what is the key to the whole of Bill C-48 and that is, again, the question of what is a nation and the question of the provinces owning resources and the federal government owning resources.

In another place I raised the question when the hon. member for St. John's East was present. I did not make a complete argument then and I was not able to get back to the question. I always respect anything that the hon. member for St. John's East does, because he does it very thoughtfully and very carefully. His answer disturbed me, however, and having thought about it a good deal, I should like to respond to it.

Basically, what I said refers not just to the province of Newfoundland, but also to the lands in the north, the lands claimed by the Dene nation. There is a long history of manipulation of small states, and provinces, or what have you, throughout the world, particularly in the United States and Australia, by large multinational, global corporations. Traditionally, it has always been easier to manipulate a state or a province than to manipulate a whole country. I think this is important and I think it should be remembered, particularly by the NDP. There are many stories about this kind of manipulation in states such as Oklahoma and Texas, and it was a major factor in the whole offshore fight.

As I recall, the hon. member for St. John's East said that, coming from Ontario, I was being patronizing by saying that Newfoundland could be manipulated. I said something else, and I will come to that in a minute. I thought about this, because actually I asked: would it not be better if the province of Newfoundland, if the Territories, the Dene peoples' land, and so on, had a sharing arrangement? In the case of Newfoundland, the Government of Canada has offered 100 per cent of the revenue to that province. Would it not be a better situation to let the federal government face the multinational companies?

The hon. member for St. John's East replied that I was being patronizing, or something to that effect. He can correct me if I am not telling the story properly. I thought about northern Ontario where I come from. Precisely the same thing has happened to us in northern Ontario, a weak but large part of our province. We are virtually treeless now, or will be treeless if we do not do something very quickly, because the province of Ontario has been manipulated by a large number of paper companies over the long term. Basically we are now in a position where the economy of the north is in serious jeopardy. In light of this I have something to say to the province of Newfoundland, to the other Atlantic provinces that would be involved as the result of this motion, and to the people of the Northwest Territories and the Yukon Territory. It is much better at this stage that we as a nation share in these resources. We should share the revenues with those parts of the country which have the resources. However, the ownership or control of these kinds of resources and the resources in those areas which would be excluded by this motion must remain in the hands of the federal government, from the international point

of view, the British North America Act and the equity of the whole country.

● (2140)

The people of Canada should understand the meaning of this motion. This motion would take away from the people of Canada control over those lands which belong to this country and offshore resources which under international law and the British North America Act belong to this country. Every Canadian should know what is happening in this House tonight.

Mr. Ray Skelly (Comox-Powell River): Mr. Speaker, I have to admit that this has been a spellbinding debate. The hon. member for Assiniboia (Mr. Gustafson) and the hon. member for Thunder Bay-Atikokan (Mr. McRae) certainly have rare gifts and unique views of the universe, and certainly opposite.

Tonight I want to deal with something which fits directly into my riding. The area off the west coast that is seriously being considered affects directly Comox-Powell River. The shallow basin that exists there has an estimated 300 million to four billion barrels of oil, and maybe as much as 90 trillion cubic feet of gas. That sits right off my riding in Queen Charlotte Sound, Hecate Strait, Johnstone Strait and off the west coast of the island. Motion No. 3 deals with the definition of Canada lands. The Northwest Territories and the Yukon certainly are lands that belong to the Government of Canada as well as the offshore area in the Arctic.

These, however, are not clearly Canada lands. There are other claims, such as aboriginal claims of peoples who were here before the tenure was decided. Those questions must be decided. Ownership of the oil and gas in those lands are called into question. This provision deals with it before those claims have been dealt with. I suggest that removal before dealing with those questions could be removing somebody else's property, and that should be effectively dealt with.

I now want to deal with the other submarine areas adjacent to the two coasts, British Columbia and areas off the Atlantic coast. I understand this motion would advocate that we delete Sable Island and the adjacent submarine areas. That makes sense, but certainly from very different points of view than those raised by members opposite and members to my right.

The two basic questions we face in this bill is, first, that the federal government advocates total jurisdiction. The second major issue, and it has been raised effectively by my colleagues to the right, is the question of tremendous discretionary power in the hands of the minister.

The basic question is: should the federal government have complete jurisdiction over development of oil and gas in offshore areas adjacent to the provinces? I feel, as do a lot of others, that the answer to that question is no. Bill C-48 gives the federal government total jurisdiction and gives the minister unfettered discretionary power. The minister continually justified that in committee saying, we really do not know what is going to happen, we want a free hand". Over the period of history of oil and gas in Canada, no one can dispute that.