

*The Address—Mr. Gillespie*

ered so graciously by the Queen, emphasized the central importance of energy to our economic future and, indeed, to the very coherence of Canada. Speaking of the field of energy, it stated:

It will continue to be the determined policy of the government to work with the provinces toward the goal of self-reliance by encouraging exploration and conservation to reduce our dependence on imported oil. Further encouragement will be given to the development of energy-saving technology, of renewable energy sources and the application of solar energy.

I should like to direct my remarks to the passage in the Speech from the Throne which I have quoted. I suppose that 110 years ago it was transportation policies, transportation decisions and transportation projects such as the CPR which forged the links holding this country together and established the basis of our economic development. Transportation policies and projects are, of course, still fundamental to the economic future of this country and to its unity. But increasingly, I believe, Canadians are recognizing a relatively new policy area, that of energy, as having the same kind of importance both today and for our future as transportation questions did in the past. Indeed, it seems to me that coal fields, natural gas fields and oil fields are going to be as important in the future as the wheat fields of Canada have been in the past. I believe that oil pipelines, natural gas pipelines, slurry coal pipelines and high voltage transmission lines will be as important in the future as rail lines and waterways have been in the past.

Canada is blessed with huge potential resources—I emphasize the word “potential”—but we shall not be able to develop those resources easily. It will not be cheap energy. For the most part it will be difficult to locate the potential supplies, expensive to develop them, and very costly to transmit them to markets because, for the most part, those resources exist in far away places remote from consumers.

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We in Canada have an opportunity which many, if not most, countries do not have. We have the opportunity to use our engineering ingenuity, and the opportunity to marshal the financial resources, management and manpower to undertake really significant projects, projects which can have a compelling and determining effect upon our future. Those projects, for the most part, are going to be aimed at reducing our dependence upon foreign oil.

As hon. members know, oil represents very close to 50 per cent of the primary energy consumed in this country. Hon. members also know that we are becoming more dependent upon imported oil for the consumption of energy. Indeed, in the past six months our imports have been running at the level of about 600,000 barrels a day. Our economic future, indeed our future as a federal nation, is going to depend upon how we meet the energy challenge, upon how we establish ourselves as a self-reliant nation. For let there be no mistake about it, Mr. Speaker: there is a looming energy crisis which is not far away. It may not yet be perceived by the public. It is not unlike, in many regards, the iceberg which sank the *Titanic*. It is no less real because there is no public perception, or strong public perception, of this looming energy crisis at the present time.

[Mr. Gillespie.]

Indeed, the fact that there is no significant public perception of it at the present time is, I believe, an additional danger for us in the future. I refer hon. members to the Gallup poll which was published within the last two days, indicating that just about 50 per cent of the people of Canada do not regard the next five years as being a period in which we will be faced with a serious energy crisis. Clearly, the perception is not there.

Not very long ago—within the last two weeks—I had the privilege of chairing the International Energy Agency meetings at the ministerial level. It was the first meeting of the International Energy Agency at the ministerial level in 2½ years. It was a meeting of ministers from 19 countries, the major oil importing and energy-using countries of the world. I think the two themes which probably dominated our discussion more than any others were, firstly, the stark reality that we will not have a choice as to whether or not our energy consumption—our oil consumption in particular—will be reduced. We have the choice as to how we reduce it, but we do not have a choice about its being reduced. Because if we do not take action ourselves to reduce through conservation measures, through substitute energy measures, through the development of new sources and through reduction of our consumption of imported oil, then others will take that decision for us.

The second stark reality was that all ministers of the consuming countries recognized explicitly, in most cases, that perhaps the biggest problem they have is conveying this sense of impending crisis, this looming energy crisis, to their people and getting the public support that they need in order to introduce measures to avert the kind of crisis situation I have been describing. It is a crisis which most of the industrialized world is forecasting to take place in about the year 1985, a period when the OPEC nations will not be able to deliver the kind of oil upon which the economies of the western world have been based. The economies of the western world have been growing in economic terms and in energy consumption terms.

For that reason, ministers took the decision to limit oil imports. The target was set of 26 million barrels a day, which compares roughly to 22 million barrels a day at the present time. Canada made the same political commitment which a number of countries made to limit our oil imports by that date. Our commitment was the commitment, which we put forward in “Energy Strategy for Canada” a little over a year ago, to reduce our imports to one-third our consumption, or to 800,000 barrels a day, whichever is the lesser.

Again, let there be no misunderstanding, Mr. Speaker: if we—that is to say, the western world—fail to understand the magnitude of this problem and fail to react to it, the change which is inevitable will be a very much more painful one. Our choice is that of being able to take measures to ease the pain, to ease the cost, to smooth as far as possible the transition from what has been an economy ever-growing in ways which, in terms of energy, has been ever-wasteful.

Failure to solve this problem will have profound effects upon the standard of living of Canadians, as it will upon those in other countries. It will have a profound effect upon the world