

Energy Supplies Emergency Act

Senate chamber today, December 12th, at 5.45 p.m. for the purpose of giving royal assent to certain bills.

I have the honour to be,
sir,

Your obedient servant,
André Garneau
Brigadier General
Administrative Secretary
to the Governor General.

The communication is addressed to the Speaker of the House of Commons.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

ENERGY SUPPLIES EMERGENCY ACT

MEASURE TO PROVIDE FOR ALLOCATION BOARD,
MANDATORY ALLOCATION OF SUPPLIES AND RATIONING
OF CONTROLLED PRODUCTS

The House resumed consideration of the motion of Mr. Macdonald (Rosedale) that Bill C-236, to provide a means to conserve the supplies of petroleum products within Canada during periods of national emergency caused by shortages or market disturbances affecting the national security and welfare and the economic stability of Canada and to amend the National Energy Board Act, be read the second time and referred to the Standing Committee on National Resources and Public Works.

Mr. Don Blenkarn (Mississauga): Mr. Speaker, I was interested in hearing the hon. member for Verdun (Mr. Mackasey). The hon. member for Waterloo-Cambridge (Mr. Saltsman), who spoke earlier on this bill, suggested that this bill represents a gigantic intrusion upon the rights of private business which goes far beyond just control of oil companies. It will intrude upon the rights of paint companies, plastics companies and will control, possibly, even the Mississauga hydroelectric commission which serves my constituents. It constitutes a total invasion of the rights of almost all business as it is difficult to imagine any industry or occupation in which fuel or energy, to use the word now in vogue, is not required.

Sir, the only possible ground for emergency legislation such as this would be a real and serious emergency. I feel strongly that the alleged emergency is being created as a result of lack of leadership, lack of direction, and possibly has been induced, as the hon. member for Verdun suggested, to make many Canadians feel that there is a problem in this area. It is about time the government said that we have all the oil we can possibly use in this country and that the only problem in amount concerns delivery; that we have all the nuclear energy we need—indeed, mines are being closed down—until the next century; that we have so much coal we do not know what to do with it and are shipping it boatload by boatload to Japan at prices which do not really pay. There really is no shortage whatsoever of energy in this country. There may be a problem with regard to petroleum pricing and with regard to petroleum delivery, but that does not constitute a national emergency.

[Mr. Deputy Speaker.]

Sir, I suggest that there really are not great difficulties with regard to delivery of supply either. The minister has said that perhaps we will be short by 200,000 barrels of crude oil per day, at the maximum. Yet suddenly we find that Mr. Shaheen can come up with 100,000 barrels of product, that we can ship 85,000 barrels a day through the Panama Canal and that we can ship between 40,000 and 60,000 barrels per day, depending on what day's figures you use, by ship and train—

An hon. Member: Nuts.

Mr. Blenkarn: —to the Montreal market. It strikes me that the problem does not involve supply so much as price. Certain countries in the world are taking advantage of the Arab-Israeli war and attempting to get blackmarket prices for their product. We are big enough in Canada to handle that situation without emergency legislation which would give the minister and the governor in council, on the basis of a suspected difficulty, the right to engage in this iniquitous, gigantic interference which would involve the activities of almost all private businesses in this country.

When we grant War Measures Act-type priorities to a government we must be very careful. Earlier this year, when there was a railway strike, it took members about 48 hours to return to the House, to get down to business and solve that problem. Not long ago, when a certain country decided to embark on the DISC program, members of parliament were rushed to this place to handle that problem. We returned pretty quickly and debated that measure. We should give the government only those powers it needs to handle specific instances involving specific problems. Must we give it carte blanche power over every business in this country merely because the government says there might be an emergency? In any event, the emergency seems to relate to price, and only to price in certain parts of the country.

Speaking of prices, my party has advocated in this House an incomes policy which would attack our real difficulty, the monster inflation caused by a government that does not care. When it was suggested to the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) that the people of eastern Canada would not want a price freeze, he suggested they could freeze.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Blenkarn: We advocated a comprehensive policy to cover inflation. We will not get that, sir, merely by giving power to some board which happens to sit in Ottawa, which is to be made up of five nameless individuals who will have the right to dictate how private business and industry in this country shall be carried on. We shall encounter difficulties involving the auto pact. As shortages of petroleum will induce people not to buy so many cars, we shall encounter difficulties with our neighbour to the south. We ought to anticipate those difficulties. The Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce (Mr. Gillespie) ought to go to the United States and head off those problems before they arise or before we are hit with United States emergency legislation or some change in the auto pact.

We might have difficulties with other trading partners. We might be concerned about dropping stock market