

*Energy Supplies Emergency Act*

I have some suspicion of power, but I know one thing, as do most Canadians: if we do not like what the government does, we can vote them out of office. We do not have that privilege with the multinational corporations of the world. I have no vote on the boards of Shell or Exxon. I have no say in their operations. They do not have to consult with me or please me in any way. There is no opposition to them. In the parliament of Canada, regardless of the power exercised in this bill, there are people who respond to the public will, and the public will make itself felt in this place.

I wanted to use that as a preamble and to indicate that on this side of the House we are not unaware of the kind of power it is possible to exercise under this bill. Whether the legislation is good or not is really going to be a matter of how interested the government is in exercising the legislation on behalf of the people. There can be a good bill before us with wide powers in it. Those powers can be used well, badly or not at all. It therefore becomes the responsibility of those of us who vote on the bill, and it is my intention to vote for it, to ensure the government is made aware of its responsibilities and is accountable to this House for what it does.

It has always been said in the private sector that oil is politics. Now, in the public sector, oil is politics. It will have to respond to the public will. There is an increasing need for governments to negotiate directly with governments. This bill will enable the government of Canada to negotiate directly with the government of Venezuela and make long-term agreements. Recently the government of Venezuela changed and they have a new attitude. What they are saying, and correctly so, is that oil is a depletable resource and they do not intend to continue sending it around the world until they run out and there is no future for their people. They intend to use oil as a bargaining weapon, not for political purposes or to further the foreign policy of Venezuela but to further the economic interest of their country and to ensure that when the oil runs out there will be some job-creating industry in its place.

You cannot get this kind of agreement by negotiating with the multinational oil companies. Venezuela does not wish to continue leaving its future in the hands of the multinational oil companies. It is willing to continue selling oil to Canada, but it wants to deal directly with the Canadian people. Admittedly, there are problems. The shipping is not in place; we are still heavily dependent on the multinational oil companies for shipping and transportation generally, as well as the marketing of oil. But that, too, can change.

If this bill does not do anything except make it possible for governments to deal directly with governments of other countries in order to further the mutual interests of those governments and their peoples, it will accomplish a great deal. It is worthy of support on that ground alone.

There is a great deal at stake in this entire business of energy. Obviously, there are differences of opinion as to how we should proceed. There are conflicts between the federal government and the provinces, between the provinces themselves, between private industry and the various governments and between nation and nation. This energy crisis provides Canada with a great opportunity to strengthen confederation. It also carries with it the danger

[Mr. Saltsman.]

that it may weaken and strain confederation. Whether it does one or the other will depend in large measure on how we in this House respond to the energy crisis. There is a necessity to go beyond just discussing energy; we have to deal with many of the increases that have plagued this country and many of the increases that set one part of the country against another. When the government meets with the various provincial leaders I am sure that will be a subject of discussion. I hope that when the federal government goes to that meeting it will be prepared to go beyond the question of energy and look at the other matters that have to be settled in conjunction with energy. It is a great opportunity for development, and distribution of the rewards of that development to the Canadian people.

Canada is one of the most fortunate countries in the world. For a long time we thought it was the second most fortunate country in the world, the United States being the most fortunate: it had everything a little bigger than what we had. At the moment we have everything, including some things the United States does not have. If we want to take inventory or look at it in terms of raw materials, we certainly have them. If we look at it in terms of food supply, we are fortunate to have one of the most productive agricultural economies in the world.

● (1600)

While our industrial structure is not the greatest, it could become the greatest because we possess what is now an extremely rare commodity—energy. It may take a year or two to link this energy with places where it can most effectively be used, but this prospect, used as a bargaining base for expansion, could enable this country to develop in a way open to few other nations in the world. When I talk about development, I am not talking about unrestrained development as though development in itself was a perfectly satisfactory goal. I am talking about sensible development, controlled development, development which will provide not profits for corporations but benefits for the people of this country; opportunities for redistributing wealth to older people, people who are sick, people who need assistance and people around the world who are less fortunate than ourselves.

I do not think we should ever be tempted to say that we have the energy, we have the resources, and to heck with everyone else; everyone else can go away. The rest of the world will not go away. We have no right to make the world so envious that eventually this envy may turn to something unpleasant. We who are in a fortunate position have a responsibility to take care of ourselves and to provide a decent society for our citizens, it is true; but we also bear responsibility for assisting less fortunate people around the world.

The bill before us directly challenges the jurisdiction of the provinces in the use of energy. Under the terms of the British North America Act, the provinces own the resources within their boundaries. They own the nickel, the iron, the oil, the gas. But the minute those resources cross either provincial or international boundaries the question of jurisdiction becomes debatable. At the moment, the provinces are saying they not only own the resources but they have the right to move them anywhere they wish.