

people east of the Ottawa Valley line, that will keep one price across Canada which is lower than the world price, that will allow for the cushioning effect of staging to the new price levels, and will also be fair to the producer provinces and give them a quid pro quo. Above all, we are prepared to bring forward proposals that will guarantee, if the government wants to carry this legislation forward, that there will be consultation before there is any unilateral force applied to a province when dealing with the property of the people of that province.

We, as a loyal opposition, are willing to try and end this confrontation deliberately sought by a government that is only conscious of political gimmicks to achieve its end. We will be putting forward these proposals. However, they can only be made in the presence of a minister who can go to cabinet and make these proposals to it. I have made some of these proposals to the minister in private and some in public.

The proposals we want to put forward will have to be dealt with seriously by the whole cabinet because this bill is a clear indication that it is a power device by this government to continue its gambling policy that it can smash the constitution by unilateral action while playing politics with the question of prices for the oil that heats our homes and runs our automobiles. This is a very serious thing the government is doing.

I suggest to the government supporters and to the parliamentary secretary in particular, that they carry this message back loud and clear because the people of Canada are not going to stand idly by Mr. Speaker. Not only will the provinces and their premiers be in rebellion, but if you do not honour the property rights of the people of a province, the people of that province can destroy a government. No provincial government wants to be destroyed by not fighting on this issue, which is the whole bedrock of our constitutional base.

We in this party are the founders and fathers of the federal system. We held out the proposal to the people that a strong federal system will only work if you undertake it by agreement and consultation. If agreement does not follow consultation, then we are not a mature nation and do not deserve to continue.

This principle of consultation which we have followed over the years has worked. I was in the Diefenbaker administration. Over 50 agreements were made with the provinces in which then the federal government took the initiative, on matters which were purely in the provincial resource area. In every case we sat down as equals with the relevant provincial government and said, "This is your resource. In the national interest we would like to achieve certain objectives for the good of all Canadian people. Here is our proposal." Every one of those agreements were signed willingly by the provinces. This not only involved matters of resources.

We even moved into the field of education. Every province signed, because they were agreements reached after consultation. We went across the field. Believing in a strong federal central government, we knew it could only be strong if we worked in harmony with the provinces which had responsibilities under their part of the constitution. That is a record which bears repeating.

Oil and Petroleum

If the people of Canada know what the issue is, they will opt for a type of federal system that does not have this concept of confrontation that was brought in by the Pearson administration in 1963, and continued by the present administration. They will opt for the principle of consultation, and then agreement. This is a vital issue affecting the way in which we run our government.

● (1740)

I conclude by repeating what I said in my opening sentence. This is not just a constitutional debate. It is a debate on a product which provides 50 per cent of the energy of Canada. This energy not only runs our factories, our trucks and our automobiles; it keeps us warm in winter. The actions of the government are driving the oil and gas companies out of this country, and hastening the day when we will have to go out and beg the world for supplies of oil to run our factories and keep us warm. If that doesn't get through to hon. members opposite, I am darned sure the premiers of the provinces, particularly the premiers of Ontario and Quebec, will be teaching them a lesson very shortly as to where the real power lies.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Symes: Madam Chairman, the government has decided to bring forward this bill at this time, and I consider it very inadvisable to do so today. It is indicative of the federal government's continuing policy of confrontation with the provinces. There is to be a very important meeting on Monday of the federal-provincial ministers of finance, which will look at the budget implications, and especially the implications attached to non-deductibility of provincial resources.

This bill cannot be considered by itself. It must be looked at in conjunction with the federal budget and the measures which relate to energy. Therefore, it seems to me very ill-advised on the part of the government to expect the House to deal with this bill, to try to ram it through, before those discussions with the provincial finance and energy ministers take place. We do not even have the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources with us today. We have before us an energy mess. It is a mess not only from the point of view of supply and from the point of view of price, but also from the point of view of federal-provincial relations. I somehow get the impression from the government side—from the backbenchers and from the Minister of Energy—that Bill C-32 is going to be one of the great solutions of the energy problem in this country. But this bill is not going to do very much.

There isn't the oil in Canada in the first place to provide Canadian industry with fuel, and consumers with fuel as well. And I think the bill must also be looked at in the context of the recent National Energy Board report which, if you go through it carefully, finally recognizes what we in this party have been saying for many years, that we are in a critical supply situation and the future does not look promising. Now the board talks about becoming net importers by 1982. But if you look at the board's charts, all they are looking at is western Canadian production and western Canadian demand. If you add eastern Canadian demand we are going into a shortfall position as early as 1977.