

When the resources belong to the people of Canada, would it be responsible to have a situation where the premiers or heads of various governments could veto development?

In the next paragraph he stated:

The notion that a particular region of this country could prevent the people of Canada from getting the benefit of resources which belong to them is one which we as a government cannot accept.

These words are fighting words thrown in the face of Atlantic Canada's premiers. I ask this house: by what authority does this government and the federal Liberal Party say that the resources off Atlantic Canada's coast belong to all the people of Canada? Maybe the Minister of National Revenue (Mr. Rompkey) can answer that question. I would like to hear him expound on this particular thesis.

As Nova Scotians we have based our claim to these resources as far back as 1621 when King James I granted the Royal Charter of Nova Scotia to Sir William Alexander. At that time, in recognition of the utter dependence of the colonies on the sea as a means of transport, he granted as well the water adjacent to our shores to the provinces. In recognition of this dependence, the king included as part of our territory a band of sea stretching about 100 miles seaward from our coast. This particular band easily encompasses Sable Island and covers a large section of the grey area, the controversial Georges Bank, and it also covers a large section of what we call the Scotian shelf.

These boundaries were observed for many years despite numerous conquests and treaty settlements. In fact, Canada's Constitution, the British North America Act of 1867, provided that Nova Scotia's limits would be exactly the same after confederation as they were before.

This claim is further supported by a parliamentary document entitled "Offshore Mineral Resources, Legal Aspects", which says at page 2:

At Confederation, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Quebec and Ontario retained ownership of the "lands, mines, minerals and royalties", and all public property then belonging to them.

This was embodied respectively in Sections 109 and 117 of the British North America Act. This proviso was also made applicable to Prince Edward Island and British Columbia when they joined Canada. In the western provinces the situation differed initially, as the natural resources were reserved to the federal government when Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba were carved out of what was then called Rupert's Land.

However, the British North America Act of 1930 subsequently transferred the same rights to those provinces, and when Newfoundland became part of Canada in 1949 it was put in a similar position by term 37 of the Terms of Union. Thus, I point out to the House, there is historical and legal justification for provincial resource ownership. This is why I suggest Bill C-48 should be withdrawn. It should be reconsidered and its wording should be changed so its enactment in its present form will not rape, rob, pillage and plunder an area which has too long been classified as a have-not area.

Canada Oil and Gas Act

We have worked hard in Atlantic Canada, especially in Nova Scotia, to literally pull ourselves up by our bootstraps. Now that we have clearly established and reaffirmed the provincial right to control land-based resources, as is clearly written into the British North America Act, the claim of the Atlantic provinces to rights covering undersea oil and gas resources off our shores can surely no longer be denied us Nova Scotians, in my view. Now more than ever before there is legitimacy in the argument long held by Nova Scotians that the undersea resources should be deeded to those of us who live in Atlantic Canada in compensation for the mineral-rich lands which other provinces have received early in this century. The Atlantic region has far too long been ignored in its request to be given the same consideration which the federal government gave other provinces through the provision of land where great treasure has been found. Land which, incidentally, all provinces originally held in joint ownership. I feel very strongly about this issue or I would not have taken the time and the effort to speak twice on this same measure.

● (1640)

We do not want the federal government to give us anything to which we are not entitled. We are not beggars and we are not begging, but neither do we want the federal government to take away from us those lands and resources which we feel, we know, and we believe we legitimately own in law under the terms of Bill C-48.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Crouse: Those are our lands. In the spirit of justice, fairness and equality, Sir, and in compensation for having surrendered our claims to the northern lands given other provinces, the day has surely arrived when our federal government should no longer hold us in bondage, making us come like a beggar hat in hand here to Ottawa looking for crumbs. It should make up for the oversights of the past and enlarge our territories by recognizing that the land under the sea, to the limits of exploitability, belong to us. We would thereby find our place in the sun.

I can assure you, Sir, that we will be like other provinces. We will be willing to share, but we feel we must have the opportunity throughout the eighties and the nineties to make Nova Scotia self-reliant. In simple language, we must be able to pay our own way. That is all we are asking.

The oil and gas finds off the east coast are promising, exciting and, I believe, they are substantial. Their development can provide us with revenues, lower cost fuels and a competitive source of power for homes and industry. We as Nova Scotians must be assured that supportive industries that foster oil development under the North Atlantic, that support and maintain drilling and the eventual production of raw fuels, are based in Nova Scotia or in Newfoundland, as much as possible. There will be plenty for both our provinces and we want to have a say.

We have been looking for the light at the end of the tunnel for years, Mr. Speaker. Now light is slowly dawning. New