

*Government Orders*

I do not want to give the impression that it is the policy of my party that these three ministries be immediately merged. I am merely suggesting that the current division between Canada's primary industries are somewhat arbitrary. On examination it may prove optimal to merge two or three of these departments.

Currently the federal government seems to have its priorities reversed when it comes to funding our primary industries. The Lloydminster upgrader in my riding is a good example. Within the oil and gas industry the federal government concentrates its efforts on subsidizing the most expensive oil to produce like the heavy oil upgrader, the Alberta tar sands and the Hibernia project. The conventional oil and gas industry is then taxed more heavily to provide the money to subsidize the otherwise non-viable enterprises.

If governments would avoid the megaproject boondoggles and reduce the tax burden on the smaller companies that are making a go of it on their own the industry would blossom and flourish. We would find that both productivity and employment within the industry would increase. The government would discover that the industry would employ more people than the megaproject would employ in any case.

• (1725)

Those real jobs within the industry are more likely to be permanent jobs than the jobs created by government subsidy where megaprojects lose money or perhaps even collapse. The same is true throughout Canada's primary industries. The conventional industry, which provides most of the jobs and job growth, is heavily taxed in order to subsidize government megaprojects.

Being a farmer I am familiar with agriculture but the past year has given me the opportunity to become familiar with other primary industries within my riding. Earlier this spring I toured the heavy oil upgrader. I was impressed with its operation but on my tours through my constituency, I was even more impressed with the level of ingenuity and diversity of the people who are proving that large scale government intervention is not required to make industry work.

The renewal of the agriculture industry and the strength of the oil and gas sector has happened, some would say, despite the best efforts of the federal government.

The infamous national energy program of a previous Liberal administration is an example of Liberal gouging that still haunts the energy industry. The industry will not stand for another form of carbon tax no matter how the government chooses to disguise it. Instead of presenting these reorganization bills such as Bill C-48, why does the government not assure us that there will be no rapping of the energy industry via taxation or via regulation?

The reason I mention all these activities in my constituency is to demonstrate that large scale government intervention is

neither necessary nor is it wanted. If farmers, foresters, fishers, and oil men and women are left to run and develop their own industries then more economic activity will result. Not only does the government activity in these areas not lead to a rejuvenation of the economy, but it is largely counterproductive.

These megaprojects create an artificial competition which, when combined with the higher taxes needed to support government enterprises, stifles the growth and productivity that would naturally occur.

Bill C-48 is yet another housekeeping bill brought in by the Liberal government. For the most part, it merely amalgamates the old Department of Forestry with the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources. I support the principle of consolidating government departments but it seems to me that when the government is reorganizing departments it makes sense to rethink its whole involvement.

What better time is there to seriously re-evaluate the role of the government in the area of natural resources? What better time to do this than in the first year or two of a new Liberal administration? Unfortunately what we have is an old bill reintroduced into the House with a few new brush strokes and no new imagination or input.

Rather than conduct a long overdue and in depth evaluation of the role of government, the Liberals would rather do nothing and just pass the legislation prepared by the previous government.

I support the small step the bill takes in reorganizing the government bureaucracy but I do not feel that the bill will improve the plight of the industry at all. There is still a long way to go. I am looking forward to the day when the government introduces some serious legislation in the area of primary industries.

The current model of government involvement does not reflect the reality that exists today outside the Ottawa bubble. The massive amount of bureaucracy and administration supporting the megaprojects is outdated and hurting the rest of the industry. The administrative overlap and high costs have to be cut. The natural resources industry is too valuable to the Canadian economy to be regulated to death.

In closing I will repeat my support for the principle of the bill. I look forward to the day when the House can consider some legislation with a little more meat in it.

[Translation]

**The Deputy Speaker:** Is the House ready for the question?

**Some hon. members:** Question.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

**Some hon. members:** Yes.