

Energy Supplies Emergency Act

An hon. Member: Low.

Mr. Stevens: I hope that is on the record. The answer to my first three questions was "very high" and the answer to the last one was "very low". I believe it was the Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce (Mr. Gillespie) who made that comment.

In truth, this is more of a crisis within government than it is an energy crisis. We have a power hungry Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Baldwin: He could generate enough gas for all of Ontario.

Mr. Stevens: The minister sees an opportunity to take unto himself and his department new powers, presumably at the expense of other ministers to whom he sometimes refers as colleagues.

In considering this bill, I believe we should remember that Canada is unique in the industrial western world. In 1973, we are 118 per cent self sufficient in oil. Surely we are owed an explanation by the government as to why a country that is 118 per cent self sufficient in oil has to live with a bill such as Bill C-236. In short, we are a net contributor to the world oil pool, and I think the minister owes us an explanation, which he did not give yesterday, as to why a nation such as ours, a net contributor to the world oil pool should have to live with a world shortfall.

The minister has sometimes said that we must be a good international citizen and that is why we must live with this shortfall. He has referred to such countries as Sweden as the ones he feels might need oil which would be diverted from Canada. Surely he is totally ignoring the different circumstances of the countries concerned. Sweden does not have the unemployment problem that Canada has, and to be casually stating that we must accept a shortfall because someone other than the Canadian Government has decreed it, is an unfortunate position to put Canadians into without further explanation. If we accept world sharing now, so be it, but I feel we do so only because the government has allowed us to drift into that position without proper arrangements being made in anticipation of the present world crisis. The government knew such a crisis could occur.

● (1600)

I have referred to the committee proceedings that took place up to June 6, that is the National Resources Committee. There was all kinds of testimony before that committee as to possible shortfalls, and how those shortfalls could be covered if they materialized. The government to date has been negligent in its efforts, and we today are faced with a crisis which is really a crisis within that government.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Laniel): Order. I regret having to interrupt the hon. member, but the time allotted to him has now expired.

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, in my statement of November 22 on national television I said that the government's first priority in the

[Mr. Stevens.]

face of the current oil shortage was to assure necessary fuel supplies to all Canadians this winter, no matter what developments took place abroad.

I described the measures that the government was taking to assure the supply of oil to regions where shortages were most likely to occur. I indicated that Canadians would be asked to co-operate in a program of voluntary restraints to economize on the use of energy. I added that mandatory allocations at the wholesale level would be required to ensure a fair and equitable distribution of available supplies.

On November 26, the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources (Mr. Macdonald), after consultation with the provinces, presented to the House a set of guidelines to conserve energy, and outlined the main features of the mandatory control system. On December 3, the minister tabled a bill to establish an Energy Supplies Allocation Board and to give to it the powers which it needs. Mr. Speaker, I am happy to participate in the debate which ensues.

It would be a mistake to underestimate the potential seriousness of the problem which led us to take these actions. Other countries, day by day, are taking the measures they think necessary to meet the same or greater difficulties. The government nonetheless believes that, barring some unforeseeable events, the Canadian short-term energy problem can be overcome.

We are confident that no Canadian need fear serious shortages of oil and fuel this winter, provided each one of us plays his part and contributes his share. We are also confident that the Canadian economy is flexible and resilient enough to adjust quickly to changing conditions and to maintain high levels of production and employment. I want to take this occasion once again to urge all Canadians to study and follow closely the guidelines given by the minister, and to ask the House to give early passage to the bill which it is now debating.

But my immediate task, Mr. Speaker, is to place before the House proposals which will set the basis for a new national oil policy. The objective of that policy, to be reached before the end of this decade, is Canadian self-sufficiency in oil and oil products.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Trudeau: During the intervening period we must create in Canada the physical capacity necessary to give us security of supply, and protection against the type of emergency now threatening us. In moving towards its objective, the government will also wish to maintain a reliable capacity for some continuing export of oil to the United States and a market in Canada for reliable foreign suppliers of oil to us.

[Translation]

The new policy will abolish the "Ottawa Valley Line". The Canadian market for oil will no longer be divided in two, one for domestically produced oil and another for imported oil. It will thus be a "one-Canada", not a "two-Canada" oil policy. The western provinces will have a guaranteed outlet for increased production; and the eastern provinces will be guaranteed security of supply.