

Energy, Mines and Resources

Mr. Dingwall: Mr. Speaker, briefly, I believe it has been stated in testimony given before the Standing Committee on Energy Legislation that there are a variety of instruments which are put into effect, if you will, in the oil and gas industry. They may take on a number of descriptions. There are joint ventures of various kinds intertwined and intermingled. Therefore, it provides for some flexibility within the act so that those particular measures will not impede the success of any Crown corporation in its dealings in trying to get something off the ground or in the ground. It is a measure of flexibility given to the Crown corporations which, I believe, is part and parcel of most, if not all, corporations in the oil and gas industry.

Mr. Beatty: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the efforts made by the parliamentary secretary to expand on that, but could he give us a specific example of an action that some company might take that would be covered by this provision? He indicates that the government is trying to give the companies more flexibility. Could the parliamentary secretary give a specific example of some action that would be taken, whether it would be otherwise dealing in securities or assets? How specifically would this particular provision come into force?

Mr. Dingwall: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member has asked a question but if I had had notice of it, I could have provided him with several examples. If he wishes, I could give the hon. member an undertaking to provide him with them. However, I do not have any at my fingertips at the moment.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Blaker): Is the House ready for the question?

Some hon. Members: Question.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Blaker): Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the amendment?

Some hon. Members: On division.

Motion (Mr. Dingwall) agreed to.

Mr. Ian Waddell (Vancouver-Kingsway): Mr. Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to introduce the following amendment:

That Bill C-102 be amended by the addition of a clause as follows:

"8. (1) The activities of Crown Corporations created under Section 6, both in terms of the public policy responsibilities and financial accountability be referred annually to the appropriate standing committee of the House of Commons.

(2) The appropriate standing committee referred to under Section 8(1), at its first meeting after reference do establish a review committee made up of members of the Board of Directors, consumers and employees of the Crown Corporation, the appointees of that committee to serve on a voluntary basis and to report periodically to the standing committee on the functioning of the Crown Corporation".

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Blaker): Is there unanimous consent that the amendment proposed by the hon. member for Vancouver-Kingsway be presented to the House?

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Blaker): Agreed and so ordered.

• (1540)

Mr. Waddell: Mr. Speaker, we are debating one of the energy bills which resulted from the splitting of the omnibus energy bill after the famous or infamous bell-ringing episode. The omnibus bill was divided into eight bills and Bill C-102 is one of them. The result of the division of the former bill is that we have had time to look at individual issues in the omnibus bill. Some very fascinating and modern problems have surfaced which perhaps we would not have debated if we had debated the omnibus bill.

I should like to deal with the creation and operation of Crown corporations. We have a strange alliance in the House. My friends on my right have quite a different attitude to Crown corporations than we in the New Democratic Party, but we seem to come up with some of the same conclusions though for different reasons. One such conclusion is that Crown corporations must be accountable. I should like to speak briefly on why they should be accountable, and on my amendment which includes a rather novel way of making Crown corporations accountable.

We in the New Democratic Party take the position that regulation-making is a necessary part of our system of government. It is inconceivable to us that governments in a western democracy could function if every decision required legislative approval. However, what is at issue is the degree of regulation under which we live. As I understand it, much of the regulation making in the United States during the 1960s and the early 1970s resulted from the desire to satisfy democratically sanctioned goals within an economic system which otherwise would be motivated exclusively to turning a profit. The present anti-regulation mood in the United States is an attempt to ease the economic burden of regulations. In the United States they deal with the economic productivity argument versus the social responsibility argument.

More sharply, of course, are the efforts to deregulate much of the environmental protection which has been set in place, an effort which Canadians sometimes find hard to understand. If our society allows deregulation in areas which one can describe as socially beneficial in order to aid the economic productivity side of the equation, we believe the whole area of advancing technology will be opened up to less democratic control. In other words, the limits of technological growth may not be in the area of energy and resources as many environmentalists would have us believe. Rather, the limits may apply to our democratic process to control the effects of technology. Clearly regulation-making power is an extension of government and therefore is a vital tool on the side of democracy; but it is a tool which cannot be abused.

In Canada we have regulation-making which was abused in the issue of the pre-build of the Alaska gas pipeline where the government, by order in council, made the wrong decision without really going to Parliament. It agreed to pre-build the pipeline and as a result, lost the financing for the entire pipeline.