Unemployment

Mr. Carl O. Nickle (Calgary South): I rise to take part in this debate, Mr. Speaker, mainly because of two recent developments which have had a real or potential major effect upon the level of employment in Canada. One of these developments was the recent collapse of the trans-Canada pipe-line project; the other was today's report concerning possible restrictions on oil imports from Canada by the United States. Both these events have some bearing, real or potential, upon the western Canadian oil and gas industry.

This industry, in eight short years, has gone from an infant to an industry which today in western Canada supports no less than 300,000 men, women and children. This figure includes, of course, not only the direct employees of the oil and gas companies but also those whose jobs have been created because of the activity in western Canada in connection with oil and gas development and exploration. These operations in oil and gas in western Canada involve the employment in all Canada of people in a great range of industries, from the steel industry in the east to many others, affecting a total of probably some half million men, women and children. Obviously it is an industry of very real importance to our country.

Before dealing with the two recent events I want to go back something over five years and quote very briefly from one of a large number of speeches I made from 1947 on in many parts of Canada and the United States, prior to the time I became a member of this house. I am going to refer back to this 1950 speech mainly because it sets out my basic policy, or is a statement of my beliefs, as to how to best serve Canada and Canada's interests through Canada's own oil and gas resources. This speech was made in two places during February, 1950; once before the Canadian Club in Toronto and again before the stockbrokers' associates in the city of Chicago. This is headed, "The Future Unitization of North American Oil and Gas Resources". Remember, this is five years old. It reads as follows:

The Alberta and western Canadian oil and gas industry now finds itself in the position where its rapid growth requires a broad, international understanding on the part of the petroleum industry of both the United States and Canada, and the citizens and governments of these neighbouring nations.

It is highly probable that within a few years Canada will become self-sufficient in petroleum, that western wells will be able to turn out enough oil to service the needs of Canada.

Now, self-sufficiency in oil can be achieved in two ways, either in fact or in balance. By "in fact" is meant the actual delivery of Canadian oil to all parts of the nation. That would be a costly procedure to producer and consumer alike. It would mean a low well-head price for crude, imposition of tariffs to keep out American and other foreign oils from some parts of Canada, and a high price for refined products to Canadian consumers outside of the prairie provinces.

By "in balance", is meant an exchange of oil between the United States and Canada in order that the producers of each nation might serve the most economic area, regardless of international boundaries. Under this plan, Canadian oil would serve the prairie provinces, Ontario and British Columbia, and serve also part of the mid-western United States market and part of the Pacific northwest states market. American and other foreign oil would continue, as now, to supply a large part of Canada's eastern market.

So far as natural gas is concerned, Canadians outside of Alberta must recognize that their chances of getting this highly convenient domestic and industrial fuel are dependent in large measure on their willingness to let the equally gas hungry accessible parts of the United States share in Alberta's resource. Albertans must be willing to share their gas resources as well as their oil.

If Canada and the United States are prepared to accept the premise that the two adjoining nations are a single great economic unit—

Mr. Gregg: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order, while I am sure the house will admit that a pipe line for gas or oil may be a means of providing employment, I do not think it is proper during this debate to discuss the ramifications of the industry as the hon. member is doing.

Mr. Nickle: As I stated earlier, Mr. Speaker, I am making a short restatement of a basic policy which I outlined some years ago. I should like, sir, with your permission, to complete that statement and then proceed to relate the real problem of unemployment in Canada to the oil and gas industry.

Mr. Gregg: The hon. member has already done that. He has said, and I agree with him, that this undertaking, if it comes about in the future, will be a direct or indirect means of creating employment. I suggest that having made that point he should not go on to deal with the policies and difficulties surrounding the industry at this time. Those matters are not appropriate.

Mr. Nickle: Any problem related to any industry in Canada, whether that problem is created by industry or by government, that in any way affects the level of employment, creates jobs in Canada or destroys jobs in Canada, I believe is relevant to this debate. I shall continue with the last remaining portion of this 1950 statement:

If Canada and the United States are prepared to accept the premise that the two adjoining nations are a single great economic unit, at least so far as oil and gas are concerned, the Alberta industry will go on to a future dwarfing its status of today, and broad national and international benefits will accrue.

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