

and export trade. We are at second reading stage of the bill, which in effect places a surtax on crude petroleum exported from Canada to the United States and sets a price on Canadian crude for purposes of interprovincial trade. In addition, it provides compensation for certain oil import costs in the area of Canada east of the Ottawa Valley. That is really what this bill is about.

● (1630)

On March 28, we heard the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) make a statement in the House to the effect that the 10 top ministers in Canada had reached an agreement, and he suggested this was a great day for federalism. In view of the fact that since 1968 the Prime Minister has held many conferences on the constitution and other things, at which he has suggested that the provinces take the federal government's view or leave it, it was rather exciting even for us over here to learn that the Prime Minister and the 10 premiers of this country had come to an accord in reference to three matters, namely the setting of the amount of surcharge, the setting of the price for Canadian crude in international trade and the setting of compensation to be paid to the provinces of Quebec and the Maritimes for the importation of oil at anywhere from \$6.50 a barrel to \$11.75, being the difference between those prices.

On April 8, I asked a question in the House as to whether Bill C-18 really included the full terms and conditions of the agreement reached between the premiers on behalf of the provinces and the Prime Minister on behalf of the federal government. I then asked whether the premiers had seen this bill, to which the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources (Mr. Macdonald) said:

As the hon. member knows . . . the general principles involved in the bill were the subject of an agreement between the first ministers on March 27. As the hon. member also knows, it is not in accordance with the practice of the House to circulate a bill outside the Privy Council before it receives the first reading in the House.

That was a neat way to get around my question, but this is not the ordinary piece of legislation. If the minister were honest and did not want to misrepresent the fact, and I would not suggest he was otherwise, he should have said that this bill contains the terms and conditions of the agreement reached between the provincial and federal governments. If we had an agreement arrived at following a constitutional conference, in turn followed by a piece of new legislation, I am confident that any responsible government would make certain that in producing that legislation to implement the changes the bill would be produced to the 10 premiers in order that they might study it, through their attorneys general, to make sure that the terms and conditions of the agreement were fulfilled. I suggest, therefore, that this answer was nothing more than a weak-kneed excuse, dealt with adequately by the hon. member for Peace River (Mr. Baldwin).

The minister suggested that bills could not be circulated ahead of time, but this bill was certainly circulated at the caucus where civil servants explained it, so there should not be any difficulty in that regard. If one accepts the strict interpretation and the bill should not be sent to the provincial premiers until it is produced in the House, surely after first reading it should go to the premiers or the respective attorneys general for study in order that the terms and conditions of the agreement could be reviewed

*Petroleum Administration Act*

to determine that the bill does not misrepresent those terms and conditions of the agreement.

Following that, I asked a supplementary question which appears at page 1232 *Hansard* as follows:

I have one supplementary question arising from the fact that this bill is the result of an agreement between the federal government and the provincial governments concerning the export tax and setting the price of crude petroleum and its by-products. Am I to understand from the minister's answer that neither he nor the government have made any attempt to obtain from the provinces an acknowledgement that the bill embodies the terms and conditions of the agreement made at that time?

The minister answered:

The terms and conditions reached as a result of that conference have been incorporated in this bill. The bill is a public document for the first ministers' examination and as far as I know no exception has been taken to its terms.

I would suggest that between the date of first reading and the date I asked that question, April 8, the provinces would not have had the time to study the bill clause by clause and come to the conclusion that it contains all those terms and conditions, but I will get to that a little later. I agree with the hon. member for Nanaimo-Cowichan-The Islands (Mr. Douglas) that this is a verbal agreement, and if there is a written agreement it has been hidden and never produced in the House. Surely, under these conditions, and I want to drive this point home, this minister on behalf of the federal government should have taken it upon himself to produce that bill in order that the provincial premiers would have a chance to study it and approve of it, whether they be premiers of producing or consuming provinces. That is the point I want to make.

I was happy to note that we flushed the minister out today, but I hope that as a result we do not have more problems when we meet in the committee. Let me spend a few minutes on the normal procedure. Even under the new rules a bill such as this would be sent to the Committee of the Whole as it is a taxing bill. If anyone thinks it is not a taxing bill he should consider the surtax being the difference between \$6.50 and \$11.75, whatever the figure may be, which is the international price. Such a bill would normally go to the Committee of the Whole. That is why I asked whether it was the government's intention to bring the bill before the Committee of the Whole for clause by clause study. I asked whether before doing that the bill would be sent to the Standing Committee on National Resources and Public Works where representatives of the provinces could present evidence during a clause by clause consideration of the bill, and might indicate whether the bill properly represents the arrived at agreement. I might add that I feel representatives of industry, as well as consumer associations, should have the opportunity to appear before the committee in order to voice their opinion and give the best advice and expertise possible as to whether this bill will serve the country and, more importantly, fulfil the terms and conditions agreed upon by the 10 premiers.

I am very pleased that the minister has followed the course recommended by his own party, which was suggested by me in the form of that question, in that this bill is now to be sent to the standing committee and then come before the House. I hope that when the steering committee gets together it will not be told that the committee should not call witnesses but should quickly rush through the bill