

*Oil and Gas Act*

River, but their arguments today in support of the amendment which they placed before the House are a little beyond my comprehension. I am not too good at some of the long words, but I think the proper word to use in respect of the amendment is that they have completely obfuscated the matter of Arctic sovereignty. Therefore, at the outset I should like to make clear that I have no intention of supporting the motion for a six months' hoist, which we ordinarily understand to be one to kill a proposal. I believe my view is shared by my colleagues in the New Democratic Party.

The hon. member for Peace River referred to clause 3 of the bill and pointed out that it contains what was in the act passed last year, which is now chapter 48 of the statutes. Clause 3 refers to the Yukon territory and Northwest Territories. That part of the bill was passed, and I submit with deference to the learned gentleman from Peace River that what was the Yukon territory and the Northwest Territories last year is still the Yukon territory and the Northwest Territories. Therefore, nothing in this bill in any way detracts from the area of Canada encompassed by the Yukon territory and the Northwest Territories.

If I understand this proposal correctly, we are talking about the sea bed; we are not talking about the geographical boundaries of Canada. If the waters within the Arctic archipelago rightfully are internal waters of Canada, and therefore part of the Northwest Territories, this fact is not in any way lessened or detracted from by the proposals in this bill.

• (3:40 p.m.)

What is important is that we are saying we intend to exercise sovereignty over the continental shelf which is rightly ours as a result of the Geneva convention which gave the sea bed to the adjacent coastal states. Therefore, we must consider this whole proposition, realizing that we are talking, not only about the Arctic Ocean and the sea bed under it but about the Pacific Ocean and the Atlantic Ocean.

Far from weakening the position with regard to our sovereignty in the Arctic, I suggest this bill may strengthen it. I do not have the chart to which the hon. member for Parry Sound-Muskoka (Mr. Aiken) referred. However, I suggest that an examination of that chart may very well show that certain areas north of the Canadian mainland which this bill will cover in so far as the exploita-

tion of oil, gas and other resources of the sea bed are concerned, would not be included in an exercise of sovereignty which would include as internal waters those lying between the islands of the Arctic archipelago and the mainland.

I will not go into the question of the sector theory, but I just throw the suggestion that at least so far as the argument about jurisdiction over territorial sea or inland waters is concerned, this bill does not weaken our position. Therefore, I think the argument for its delay on the grounds advanced by the hon. member for Parry Sound-Muskoka and the hon. member for Peace River falls to the ground. I hope they appreciate that I am not in any way discounting their concern that our government take a firm position on the question of our exercise of sovereignty. We in this party are with them on that point.

If one were to consider the question of whether we should go slow on the provisions of this bill, one might come to the conclusion that perhaps of greater concern is the question raised by my colleagues, the hon. member for Battleford-Kindersley (Mr. Thomson) and the hon. member for Kootenay West (Mr. Harding), namely, the question of the potential danger to Canada and to future generations of Canadians of any sort of oil exploitation in underwater areas.

The examples they mentioned of the California coast and the incident which is fresh in our minds—which is not directly related to the bill—of the destruction of the oil tanker and the resulting serious harm to the ecology of the east coast, should put this matter very much to the fore when we consider a proposal for the exploration of oil and gas in underwater areas within the boundaries of the continental shelf.

With this point in mind I have examined the act that was passed last session, with particular reference to the authority which, as has already been pointed out by my colleagues and others taking part in the debate, has not been exercised—in this case the authority of the Governor in Council to make regulations. The act as it now stands does give some authority in section 12 (m), (p) and (q). I think it is important before this bill passes through the committee stage, at least for the government to make clear the substance of the regulation which it intends to enforce in respect of these paragraphs of the section. In order to underline the point I am

[Mr. Barnett.]