

*Canada Petroleum Resources Act*

figures for which I asked a year ago are very important for understanding this subject, I wonder if I could ask the Government to get an answer for my written question before the end of this week or next.

**Mr. Speaker:** Shall all questions be allowed to stand?

**Some Hon. Members:** Agreed.

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**GOVERNMENT ORDERS**

[English]

**CANADA PETROLEUM RESOURCES ACT**
**MEASURE TO ENACT**

The House resumed from Friday, May 9, consideration of the motion of Miss Carney that Bill C-92, an Act to regulate interests in petroleum in relation to frontier lands, to amend the Oil and Gas Production and Conservation Act and to repeal the Canada Oil and Gas Act, be read the second time and referred to a legislative committee.

**Mr. Dave Nickerson (Western Arctic):** Mr. Speaker, it is going to be a pleasure for me to speak for a few minutes on the new proposed Canada Petroleum Resources Act. This is something in which of course all Canadians have a great interest, but for those of us who hail from the areas where this Act will govern the disposition of oil and gas rights it is of double interest.

This Bill, Sir, is one of the final nails in the coffin of the late and not particularly lamented National Energy Program. If we compare Bill C-92 with the Canada Oil and Gas Act, which is to be no more after the passage of this Bill, we can perceive the difference in philosophy between the Liberals, who were responsible for the National Energy Program, and the Conservatives, whose philosophy is to be enshrined in the new Canadian Petroleum Resources Act.

● (1110)

On the one hand we have extreme Government supervision of the industry, for example, a great deal of government control over the day-to-day activities of the people who drill for and produce oil and gas in northern and eastern Canada. Under the Canada Oil and Gas Act the deals were negotiated. When someone has to go to Government to make a special deal, it always leaves room for abuse. It is much better if the rules of the game are known beforehand and if we have an open competitive system such as that contemplated under Bill C-92. Under the Bill it is to be left largely to market forces to determine such things as the amount of drilling to be done, the amount of production which will take place, and the prices at which crude oil and gas can be sold. All things which can be left to the open market will be left to that open market.

In my opinion it is time the dispositions on what is now known as Canada oil and gas lands be made available. Under

the present circumstance of lowered oil and gas prices, there might not be quite the same level of interest in acquiring oil and gas lands as there would have been some time ago, but land should be opened up. There has not been any land made available for years and years, except some special cases wherein Petro-Canada was concerned.

One corollary which arose because the previous Government refused to make land available was that Canadian companies had to go cap in hand to the multinational companies that had previously tied up all this land to negotiated farm-ins at great expense. That is not the way it should have been; it worked to the detriment of Canadian companies and to the advantage of largely foreign-owned multinational corporations. That was the result of the Liberal policy of refusing to make oil and gas lands available.

One of the best things the Bills does is to remove the back-in, the infamous 25 per cent back-in. It was one of the worst aspects of the national energy policy. It put us on par with banana republics, that type of approach to life. It was grossly unfair. I am pleased to say that it will no longer exist once the Parliament of Canada has passed Bill C-92.

Now I should like to look at some of the specific measures contained in the Bill. One of the first things which hits someone reading the Bill is that there seems to be some discrepancy between the English and French versions. The French version is much shorter than the English one, which is not usually the case. Certain paragraphs on the English side are not on the French side. For example, in the English version there is Clause 37(1)(a), (b), and (c), whereas there is only a Clause 37(1) in the French version. When this matter gets to committee we will have to look at it closely so that both the English and French versions of the Bill read in the same manner. Otherwise I can foresee us getting into difficulty in the courts in years to come.

The Bill changes the name of Canada Lands, something which I did not really like that much, to the term frontier lands. I have certain reservations about that term as well. Undoubtedly the Bill regulates dispositions on the frontier lands. There is no doubt the Sverdrup Basin is a frontier area, as are the Beaufort Sea and the eastern offshore. Anyone who lives in Watson Lake, Yukon, or Hay River, Northwest Territories, might take exception to being told that they are on the frontier; that is not quite the case.

The lands in question can be divided into two parts. There are those over which there is no doubt that Canada has continuing jurisdiction, and there are those lands which are more correctly territorial lands, those lands in Yukon and Northwest Territories which are presently held in trust by Canada for eventual provinces to be established in those areas. Although it may not make a difference to this Bill, it ought to be borne in mind by the Government of Canada and by the Parliament of Canada that at some point in time those lands will be transferred to new provinces and that in the meantime there is a trust relationship. We, as the Parliament of Canada,