

Taxation

continues to be the main item of discussion, or non-discussion if you like, between the provincial and federal governments. This is rightly so because the people of Newfoundland and Labrador recognize the amazing potential for offshore development. It has the potential to improve dramatically our economic fortunes as a province, a potential to alter for the better our role as a fully participating partner in the Canadian confederation and to address the pressing needs for employment opportunities and improved social services as well as an adequate economic infrastructure.

Even more important than all of this is the potential to allow all of us as Newfoundlanders and Canadians to hold our heads high with complete dignity and unquestioned justification.

• (1630)

It is that aspect of the offshore potential which is little understood by those hon. members who do not happen to have the good fortune to be Newfoundlanders. It is the crucially important issue of dignity in this entire debate which goes to the very root of our commitment as Newfoundlanders, our unbridled determination to ensure we extract from that offshore resource every possible ounce of benefit. We will leave no stone unturned, no avenue unexplored and no possibility untapped to achieve that goal. The offshore issue is much bigger than moving oil from source to market and much bigger than moving it from Hibernia to the consumer. The real issue has more to do with hope, with opportunity, with the future and with dignity.

We as Newfoundlanders often talk about getting ready for a rainy day and having a little security down the road. We have seen a lot of rainy days, days when the head of the family had to leave home to work in the Arctic because he or she could not get a job at home; days when a son or daughter had to say goodbye and go off to Alberta where an employment opportunity was waiting, an employment opportunity which was not available back home in Newfoundland; days when the family business went under because the "now it's good, now it's not so good" Newfoundland economy was going through another of its not so good periods. As I have said, we have seen a lot of rainy days in Newfoundland.

Can we be blamed, then, if we are so determined to snatch a bit of sunshine? Can we be faulted if we see, in the offshore potential, an umbrella, a road to better things? That is the context in which we, as Newfoundlanders, talk about, dream about and fight about Hibernia. On that, we are all agreed. On the objective, the end goal, there is no division. That is not what divides us as Newfoundlanders. It is not the objective, not the end, but, rather, the means to that end which divides us. How we get there is the reason for the row, and it is a completely understandable row bearing in mind the stakes at issue.

Mr. Peckford, the Premier of Newfoundland, and I do not see eye to eye on every detail as to how we sort out this particular issue and how we reach our common objective, but it is a common objective. I am confident that our objective, mine

and his, is one and the same. The fact that he disagrees on the means does not mean his commitment to the cause is any less than mine, or any more than mine for that matter. Our differences on the method, the way in which we get to that objective, should not suggest that he is any less a Newfoundlander than I, or vice versa for that matter.

All of us are determined to be masters in our own household. I use that parallel, that particular analogy, quite deliberately. We are determined to be masters in our own household. A household is not a hermit's cabin tucked away somewhere up in the wilds, in the woods, with its back turned on the world. I am referring to a household, a vibrant, living, successful unit of itself, thriving not because of its isolation from the real world, but rather because its members are plugged into the real world, benefiting from that contact and contributing to the well-being of the world because of that contact.

It will come as no surprise to Your Honour that the overwhelming majority of Newfoundlanders live in the real world. Most do. Sadly, a few do not. That scattered few includes a couple of people who have the ear of the Premier of Newfoundland. He himself lives in the real world, but a couple of people who have his ear do not live in the real world. That scattered few who do not live in the real world are unfortunately still fighting yesterday's battles. Why does someone not tell them that the decision to join Canada was made by Newfoundlanders more than 30 years ago?

Mr. Siddon: You tell them.

Mr. Simmons: The issue was put to bed at that time. The future of Newfoundland and the future of Canada are tied closely together. Why do the scattered few not recognize that fact of life?

Mr. Siddon: How many voted in the last election?

Mr. Simmons: If only they would recognize the realities of today's world, the Premier, Mr. Peckford, would be getting much better advice than he is presently getting from such people.

I want to deal briefly with some of the misconceptions heard these days, especially in Newfoundland and Labrador, but to a lesser degree also around the country. Some of the misconceptions concern the offshore issue as it relates to Newfoundland, and some particularly relate to the federal government's role in the offshore issue to date. One of the current misconceptions, especially because of the reference by the Government of Canada of the Hibernia area issue, is that it was the federal government which first put the issue before the courts. The question concerning offshore, as it relates to possible court references, goes back a long, long time. But for the sake of brevity this afternoon, let me just deal with the last five years or so.

When the present Premier of Newfoundland was minister of energy in the Newfoundland government, he and the then federal energy minister, Mr. Gillespie, agreed to a joint court reference. That is right, Mr. Speaker; they both agreed that