

Energy Supplies Emergency Act

of pricing time and time again. The hon. member for Don Valley (Mr. Gillies) made proposals, as did my leader, but the government elected to ignore those proposals. We are facing a problem now, and I think we will be facing it for months to come, mainly in respect of pricing, and we face that problem because this government would not act when it had the opportunity and should have acted.

So, on the question of a crisis, the evidence has not been brought forward or made apparent. The government will have this bill enacted, but whether or not it will act on it is something we will have to wait to see. If events occur during the next few months in respect of petroleum prices, it will be interesting to watch this government to see whether and how it will act. I tell the minister now that we will be watching him very closely.

The government did have a remedy under the Export and Import Permits Act in respect of problems which existed in regard to bunker oil on the east and west coast. It also had remedies available under the National Energy Board Act. We indicated at the very beginning, over a month ago, that if it was found essential to move a very simple amendment to the National Energy Board Act it would have been accepted by this party. Such an amendment could have been moved to provide for the mandatory allocation and, if necessary, rationing of petroleum products. That could have been accomplished without all the ballyhoo in respect of these additional powers the government is seeking under this bill. Had the government wanted to take action this amendment would have been passed weeks and weeks ago, but the government saw fit not to take that action. It wanted the powers contained in this bill, and obviously it is going to get them.

The witness who appeared before the committee, the President of the Imperial Oil Company, said categorically, that the company liked this bill and wanted it because it gives them protection. In fact, it gives them the right to do what they have been doing in the past.

One sometimes wonders when reading the newspapers how many tankers are lying off the coasts of various countries waiting until prices reach a level that is acceptable to the companies. The Secretary of State for External Affairs (Mr. Sharp) said the other day that, while Canada was not on the embargo list of Saudi Arabia, we were nevertheless not getting crude from that country. There are countries which are on the embargo list which are getting crude petroleum. One sometimes wonders to what extent this administrative crisis may have been contrived, partly by the government and partly by the large oil companies, for certain purposes. I cannot make any specific allegation, but we have all heard about the inquiries being instituted in the United States and other places to determine the effects this contrived crisis may have had on the prices of these petroleum products.

In any event, that is history. As far as Canada is concerned at the moment, it is my view that the evidence the minister has brought forward would support the suggestion that this crisis is something which now lies in the womb of history and has not yet come to light. In light of that, the government has created this Frankenstein bill.

Let me briefly sum up the powers this bill gives to the government at the instigation of the multinational oil companies, or perhaps I should say it is a creation result-

[Mr. Baldwin.]

ing from the connivance of the socialists and those big multinational corporations.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Baldwin: Just seeing these people as bedfellows should give us cause for concern.

Mr. Alexander: It is nauseating.

Mr. Baker: It is revolting.

Mr. Baldwin: In the matter of allocating gasoline and other petroleum products, when this bill is passed a board will be set up with dictatorial powers to control the manufacture, distribution and price of not only gasoline but hundreds and hundreds of articles and commodities only distantly related to petroleum, such as tars and plastic cups. The government, through this bill, is running roughshod over the Bill of Rights by taking away any effective opportunity to appeal from the despotic fiats of the board, not the corporations, as the hon. member for York South (Mr. Lewis) hinted yesterday.

If that hon. member had read, as he should have, the amendment we offered he would have seen that it was restricted only to the right we attempted to provide those individuals injured by any action of the board under an order or regulation. This right was within fairly narrow terms, and was limited to individuals, such as proprietors of retail service stations and small co-ops who might have been injured. Those are the kind of people we were attempting to assist by giving them the opportunity for recourse if they suffered loss or damage because of what was done under this act. The government, with the help of the NDP, has struck that down. In addition, the government has insisted, with the NDP cheering them on, upon allowing the board to overrule any provincial rights with regard to the simple issue of contractual relationships which lie normally within their jurisdiction. It was with these things in mind that we fought to make this a better bill. We succeeded in a limited way and I am sorry we did not get further.

● (1500)

I want to say in conclusion that what we are dealing with here is a repetition of what I have seen in this House over and over again in the last six or seven years under this government, that is, a steady diminution of the powers of the legislative system and the handing over to the executive of powers which this House should be exercising. Every time we move, every bill we pass, every session we go through we find this repeated. All over the world the lights of parliamentary democracy flicker fitfully against the winds of excessive government power. It is bad enough when the takeover is open and blatant and leads to an obvious dictatorship, but the real danger lies more within the few countries like Canada which still maintain the appearance of the sovereignty of the legislature. As the sands of the hour-clock run down, they carry with them, parliament by parliament, session by session, bill by bill the remnants of control of the elected representatives as such, as contrasted with the arbitrary control of the executive namely, cabinet and bureaucracy.