

Canada Oil and Gas Act

It is not often, Mr. Speaker, that I come to the defence of my good friend, the hon. member for St. John's East, being of a different political stripe and all that, but I think it is a bit of a pity that an attempt has been made to humiliate him in this House this afternoon. The implication is made by the hon. member for St. John's West that somehow the hon. member for St. John's East was not able to put the argument forward, and that he, the junior member, had to rise and elaborate and embellish the argument, as it were. Indeed, in some instances he took a very different tack from the hon. member for St. John's East. Mr. Speaker, I think the record should show that.

Just to make a quick and passing observation before I come to the substance of the motion before us—

Mr. Waddell: Don't do that. Don't stop now!

Mr. Simmons: —I thought some of the wind had gone out of his sails. He was just a shadow of his former self today. There was lots of sound and lots of fury, all signifying not very much. He was really not up to it today. If hon. members observed closely, his heart was not in it any more. I suppose it is very difficult. It becomes embarrassing to rise in the chamber and go through the motions of identifying with the hon. member for St. John's East, a gentleman one rarely identifies with on anything. It was more important and significant that he found himself defending the premier of the province which the hon. member for St. John's East, the hon. member for St. John's West and I represent in the House. He placed himself in the position of actually being on the same side of an argument as the Premier of Newfoundland. It must have been galling and very embarrassing for the hon. member for St. John's West.

● (1700)

A week or so ago on a very related issue he took quite a different stance. The hon. member for St. John's West is not known to be silent on many issues, but let me draw the attention of the House to a matter on which he has been extremely silent, and not only he but the hon. member for St. John's East as well.

A short while ago in the House the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources (Mr. Lalonde) rose and told the House that the government was prepared to facilitate the movement of hydro through the province of Quebec. We all know the stance of the hon. Leader of the Official Opposition (Mr. Clark) on it. He is on the record as being against it; the hon. member for Yellowhead opposes it. We know that the Premier of Newfoundland is very much in favour of it because he came out and said no. We must give the man credit: he came out and said that he was happy with the new initiative of the government.

What did the hon. member for St. John's East say or what did the hon. member for St. John's West say on that particular issue? If they are as concerned about energy issues as they affect the economic future of Newfoundland as they purported to be in the House this afternoon, where is their voice on the issue of transmitting hydro through Quebec? Where is their voice? It has been completely silent. There was not one tittle,

not one syllable, not one word from the hon. member for St. John's West; not a word, not a syllable, not a phrase from the hon. member for St. John's East on the issue. Why? It was because they were caught.

Mr. Crosbie: That is not the subject.

Mr. Simmons: The hon. member for St. John's West conveniently says that that is not the subject. Now he wants to split hairs. He wants to say that we should not talk about this kind of energy. Let us compartmentalize it now to satisfy the hypocrisies of the hon. member for St. John's West; let us talk about oil today and leave hydro energy over there because it might embarrass him. I am not too concerned if I embarrass the hon. member for St. John's West on this particular occasion. If he wants the floor to tell us where he stands on the transmission of hydro through Quebec, I will yield the floor to him for a moment. In two weeks he has not said a solitary word on the subject. We still do not know where he stands. He has two fairly clear choices. Does he stand with the federal leader of his party or with the provincial leader of his party? He cannot do both because they are diametrically opposed positions. One is for it, the other is against it.

Mr. Crosbie: I am ready to speak.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ethier): Is the hon. member for St. John's West seeking the floor on a point of order?

Mr. Crosbie: Mr. Speaker, it is a point of order only in the sense that the hon. member offered to let me speak on this issue. Let me make it quite clear that on the issue of the spurious announcement of the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources, it was something he might do in a proposed bill if it was passed by the House. It was all very speculative. The government is still not committed to it.

Mr. Lalonde: Where do you stand?

Mr. Crosbie: It is hardly worth passing a comment on it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ethier): Order, please.

Mr. Crosbie: I am quite disappointed in the illusion which has been created this afternoon.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ethier): Often invitations are given across the floor requesting the viewpoints of certain members, but at this time I invite the hon. parliamentary secretary to conclude his remarks on the motion before the House.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Simmons: Mr. Speaker, I think I demonstrated the seriousness of my invitation by allowing him the floor to state his position. It became clear—and *Hansard* will show how clear—that in the three or four sentences he uttered he avoided giving any position. He cast aspersions on the legitimacy of the legislation being proposed and that kind of thing but he avoided skilfully, as only he can do, giving a