

*Energy Supplies Emergency Act*

might and greatness of Ontario, and about the strange independence of the people in the Atlantic provinces.

He wanted to know why we did not protect our country better against assimilation. I was able to tell him that in reality we had done that. He was unaware of what we had done. I told him that because we had two official languages, and a wonderful culture in Quebec that was unique and different, these in themselves were protection against assimilation by our friendly neighbours in the United States. I told him that although we were exposed to U.S. television, magazines, radio and newspapers there was no way in which our magnificent culture would disappear, and as Toynbee once said, it would be the last, along with the Chinese people, to remain on the face of the earth. Mr. Speaker, there is no way that the French culture will ever disappear or be assimilated because of our proximity to the United States; and it should not, because that would be not only Quebec's loss but Canada's loss as well. It is one of our safeguards against assimilation by the English element in the United States.

I was able to explain to this relatively new Canadian that Canadians tend to have an inferiority complex and that we move very slowly. Other hon. members have commented on this. But it is significant that we have placed on the statute books legislation that for all time prevents our newspapers and magazine publications being sold to non-Canadians. I said that we had made it impossible for radio and television to be controlled by outside interests, and that we made it impossible for the banks, finance companies and other financial institutions to be controlled by non-Canadians. So, Mr. Speaker, slowly but surely we have protected ourselves. We have protected our Canadian identity. Now, suddenly, people in other countries are looking at Canada with a tremendous degree of envy and respect.

Just the other night there was an article in the *Globe* or the *Montreal Star* telling of Canadians who had left this country 10 or 15 years ago and who had returned for a visit. They expressed their amazement at the maturity of the country, not only at the *joie de vivre* of Montreal but also finally of Toronto, thanks to the new Canadians who made that once bland city more exciting.

Having said all that, Mr. Speaker, I do think that as politicians we tend to forget and underestimate the intelligence of the average Canadian, not only the man in the board room but the man who fishes out of a dory off the Atlantic provinces or Newfoundland, the man who goes into the coal mines in Cape Breton, the French-speaking Canadian who works in the woods, the iron worker at Blairmore, the man digging coal in the interior of Alberta, all of whom are not unaware that there is a serious problem. They seem a little more concerned about the energy problems than the normal problems we talk about daily in the House of Commons. We tend to forget that everything we consider a crisis is not a crisis 15 miles or 15 minutes away from the House of Commons. We become very disruptive and bitter in our exchanges, and periodically Canadians do pause and look at the House of Commons and wonder whether or not we are concerned about the vital things.

That is exactly what is happening in this energy issue. The people in the Atlantic provinces are concerned and

[Mr. Mackasey.]

fearful about whether they will have oil at all this winter, if the winter happens to last long or if events beyond our control take place, such as escalation of war in the Middle East. That is what this allocation bill is really all about. This is also true of the people of Quebec. Then there are the people who are most unfortunate, the working poor and the underprivileged who are worried about the price of oil even if it is available. They are looking to us in Ottawa for leadership.

Whether the NDP supported our policy or not, I can say that we would not have worried about an election on the energy issue in February. There would be no better issue for a government to go to the people on and to be able to reply, "We were forced into an election on the energy crisis by a majority in the House," when Canadians would ask, "Why aren't you in parliament looking after our problem, instead of running around the country trying to get re-elected?" This election would not have been a problem even if thousands would have been disenfranchised by blizzard or snow. Whether the New Democratic Party supported our energy policy or not was immaterial, because politically speaking it would have been a great issue for the Liberal Party to say they were forced to go to the country rather than stay in the House of Commons and do what they were elected to do some months ago—that is, look after the rights and problems not only of the people of the west or of Quebec but of all Canadians.

● (1650)

We Canadians are not particularly concerned about the constitution; indeed, many have never read the constitution. All they know is that there is something wrong with energy at the moment, that we are short of it; and they want to know if they are going to get it this winter and if they are going to be able to pay for it. This is the fundamental question that the House is seized with. Some might ask what this has to do with national unity. Mr. Speaker, it seems to me that we have waged one war in the last ten years in this House that was the stumblingblock to real unity in this country.

As I have said, we are different from Americans but we are not anti-American. I do not think anybody in this House would want anyone as a neighbour but the Americans, despite their problems. That does not mean to say that we want to be American, and being pro-Canadian does not necessarily mean that we are anti-American or anti-anyone. We have our own identity. We are a country that in a sense has developed the wrong direction—from west to east rather than from north to south. We have the problems of a vast country three or four thousand miles in length; we have regional differences and cultural differences. In this country transportation means as much as it does in Russia. But basically—and probably this confuses political scientists all over the world—we stay together.

There is something unique about the people who live in this country, and we want it to remain that way. Nobody wants to remain in Canada more than the people of Quebec. They have made that clear in this House and in the provincial election in a virtual referendum. They are saying, "If the price of remaining in Canada means we have to be a little more tolerant, a little more patient toward obtaining equality in the public service, equality in language, equality in job opportunities, if we have to