

Canada Oil and Gas Act

awaiting the struggle". The struggle has come in the north and in the east and west coast, because Bill C-48 will speed up, more than anyone in the country now realizes, I think, the development of our offshore and our north. We have to make sure that we have the toughest possible regime which will protect the interests of ordinary Canadians.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Marc Lalonde (Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources): Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to participate in this debate at the report stage and to consider various amendments which have been proposed to this most important bill. I recognize, indeed, that this is a major piece of legislation which has great significance for the future development of oil and gas resources in Canada, and particularly all those resources which are in the Arctic and the offshore. This bill represents a major step forward compared to any previous legislation which has been put forward in the past, and, unfortunately, was never passed, for various reasons.

Up until now, this whole sector, that immense part of Canada which is part of the Northwest Territories, the Yukon and all the offshore, was controlled only via regulations adopted by the federal government; and some of the regulations, going back 20 years, have been completely outdated. Therefore, Bill C-48 brings a modern regime to Canadian lands, a regime which will compare favourably with any other regime set up elsewhere in the world and will ensure that the people of Canada as a whole are going to benefit from these developments. When I say the people of Canada as a whole, I obviously include, more particularly, the people in the regions neighbouring those developments or the regions in which those developments are going to take place.

This bill has given rise to extended debate. It was the hope of the government that this bill would have been considered only in the fall, at the committee stage and for third reading. As Your Honour knows, last week the government proposed that we adjourn and reconvene some time in October to pursue discussions of various legislative measures. Unfortunately, the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Clark) has decided that we should keep on sitting in case legislation concerning the postal dispute is required, rather than adjourn and have the House resume at any time if such a measure is required. Today we are beginning this report stage. I do not know how long we will debate this project. Obviously, it will depend on how long we are required to stay before an adjournment is agreed to by the opposition. As far as we are concerned, we are very happy, nonetheless, to see that debate can begin on this particular measure. My parliamentary secretary gave a commitment that the bill would not be proceeded with on third reading before the House resumes in the fall. We certainly intend to keep this commitment, assuming, however, that the House will adjourn.

I want to repeat that if the House is kept in session through the whole summer and into September, we will obviously have to proceed with this bill; but I assume that the official opposition will conclude that it is reasonable to have some adjournment at some stage during the course of the summer.

The committee has had 73 meetings and heard 130 witnesses during that time. I have remarked that the hon. member for Vancouver-Kingsway (Mr. Waddell), as a good former Torontonian, talked about many aspects of this bill. He referred to a cartoon in the *Alberta Report*. I suggest that he should have read, rather, an article by Bob Hepburn entitled "The NDP's Energy Headache", in which this analyst, having attended the recent NDP convention, concluded—

Mr. Waddell: He was not there.

Mr. Lalonde: —that the NDP, as usual, is completely wishy-washy, if not completely awash, on the subject.

Mr. Waddell: He was not there.

• (1610)

Mr. Lalonde: The NDP did not even give birth to a mouse. The whole debate on energy at the recent NDP convention clearly showed that the NDP, as in so many other areas, does not know whether it is going or coming.

As far as the points raised by the hon. member are concerned, I want to stress particularly his argument about the people of the north not having been heard. This is a most unfair statement to make as far as the committee is concerned. If the hon. member had attended all the committee hearings, he would have realized that many representatives of the north came, including some very outstanding representatives. For instance, representatives of the government of the Northwest Territories, the Dene people and the Inuit were present. They made their representations. They were heard. Numerous briefs were presented on behalf of various organizations in the north. I am amazed that the hon. member for Vancouver-Kingsway had the gall to say the people of the north have not been represented when two members from the north, the hon. member for Western Arctic (Mr. Nickerson) and the hon. member for Nunatsiag (Mr. Ittinuar), participated very actively in the debates of that committee. They brought a most constructive approach to those debates.

Mr. Waddell: That is what they are saying, not me.

Mr. Lalonde: I want to congratulate both members for the positive attitude they took and for the genuine effort they made in bringing improvements to the bill. Many improvements were accepted. I commend also the Inuit council on national issues which went to work and put forward constructive amendments and made strong recommendations respecting the bill.

In addition, I should mention that the hon. member for Yukon (Mr. Nielsen) had a few words with me. I did not see him too often during the committee hearings but I know that he was otherwise busy. Nevertheless he expressed his interest. However, the notion that three members of Parliament for the north, no matter from which party they come, would not be speaking for the people of the north appears to me to be the most outrageous statement to come from another member of Parliament. This kind of notion that members of Parliament in