

Energy

energy policies which will protect us from the whims and wars of such a volatile place as the Middle East. In the face of this, the propaganda machine of the Liberal government is telling Canadians to be complacent, to be confident of the future; "the government has everything under control; Big Brother will look after you." This, Mr. Speaker, is an unforgivable manipulation of public opinion to camouflage the lack of policy to date and to prepare the ground for what, from all reports, appears to be a totally misdirected policy for our energy future.

Rather than taking as its theme the objective of reducing concern in our energy position, the government should be attempting to increase the sense of urgency of Canadians to get on with the job of achieving self-sufficiency, to bring on new sources of energy, to increase conservation efforts, and to reduce our dangerously large dependence on foreign imported oil.

One must question why the government has been so complacent and why its advertising policy should attempt to transfer this complacency to Canadians. Why is it that the opposition must bear the burden of carrying that message to Canadians? This is the second time we have had an opposition day devoted to the problems of supply in this country and the problems of the international disruptions which are going to cause great problems to our country in the future. Why is it that we in opposition must pit our resources against the power of government and its propaganda machine? I have tried hard to understand those reasons. The simplest reason is to hide the obvious shortcomings of government policy to date. Another reason is that any move to self-sufficiency must involve a higher price for oil.

The commitment of the Liberal Party in the last election to hold down the price of oil and gasoline is a most shortsighted policy objective. The disastrous consequences of that are becoming clearer every day. I will discuss some of these later in my remarks. In the meantime, the propaganda machine must operate to deflect the concerns of Canadians from the serious short-term dangers of that policy.

The final reason, I believe, is one which must be viewed in the context of the current constitutional discussions. The Liberal government is trying to split the west from the rest of the country. That is clear. It has stated that its energy policy will "poison the atmosphere"—again, that is a quote from another leaked government document—of future constitutional negotiations. Energy shortages are inevitable because of its policy shortcomings. What better way of deflecting criticism is there than to say that things are in good shape now and, when the shortages come, to blame it on the west? I could let my thinking run further, but I will not succumb to that temptation. However, it is a sad commentary in today's political world that one must push oneself in more Machiavellian terms in order to attempt to understand the policy objectives of this government.

An hon. Member: Anything for power.

Mr. Wilson: At any rate, the clear results of the policy shortcomings are that we must plan for a period of oil supply interruptions, allocations, and rationing. We must plan for periods when some Canadians will not have enough oil to heat their homes, drive their cars, run their tractors and run their fishing boats. We must plan for the shock that our manufacturing, our mining, our paper, our tourism and our transportation industries will suffer when emergency allocation commences, when we have the gas line-ups which have been such a serious problem in the United States' economy. We must expect to suffer a far larger shock when higher prices for offshore oil are forced into our economy in emergency conditions. These are the conditions which we must anticipate and plan for. But they are conditions which are so unnecessary. They are conditions which we could have avoided with a comprehensive energy policy in place, similar to that announced by our government last December.

The Clark government took, as the keystone to its energy policy, the clear objective of energy self-sufficiency. Our fundamental concern was supply. Security of supply was at the core of all aspects of our policy. Energy is the lifeblood of our economy, and in a northern climate such as ours it is a critical element to the livelihood of all Canadians. We were concerned about the impact of the policy on low and middle-income earners. That is why we introduced an energy tax credit, to protect certain groups of Canadians from the price impact of the policy. But without a supply of oil, the price becomes irrelevant.

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The damage, both real and potential, which this lack of energy policy is inflicting on the country, is incalculable. We, in the official opposition, urge the government to take as the central theme of their energy policy the objective of self-sufficiency, and to do those things which are necessary to bring on new sources of supply, to avoid the hardship that consumers, particularly those in Ontario and the east, will suffer if shortages occur. We urge this government to reverse the ill-conceived and dangerous direction which their policies have followed in recent years.

The picture which we are facing is not without its bright spots. Canada has the potential of being one of the great energy producers in the world. The tragedy is that we are not capitalizing on it. Canada's energy future can be strong. There is a tremendous opportunity for economic development based on energy if we can get our act together, if we can grasp the significance of this potential and translate it into policy. For some months now I have been referring to our energy future as an opportunity for our over-all economic development.

The energy industry is the growth industry of the 1980s and 1990s. Canada needs some \$300 billion in investment in its energy sector during the 1980s, and at least double that in the 1990s. To put that into perspective, our total national income in 1980 will be about \$300 billion as well. In other words, we will be spending in the next ten years, in the oil and gas, electrical, pipeline and other energy industries, an amount