

Energy Supplies Emergency Act

be of considerable interest to the provinces; indeed, the consuming provinces in eastern Canada, including Quebec, are going to be very interested in finding out how much a barrel of oil, or gas or home heating fuel or indeed the building blocks for their petrochemical industry, are going to cost. They will also be interested in finding out if they will have a petrochemical industry and how much it is going to cost. The producing provinces are interested in finding out how much they will get from the sale of oil.

If there is not a strong federal presence at that particular conference, the party which will suffer is the body politic of Canada and all the residents of this country. To my mind, it is essential that we recognize the obligation of the federal government to protect its jurisdictional responsibilities. I suggest to you, Mr. Speaker, that any attempt to erode the powers of the federal government at such an important period in our history is very serious indeed. I suggest that if the opposition is interested in tying the hands of the federal government prior to that conference, they are acting most irresponsibly and will have to bear the consequences. There is no one who can say of this government that it is not acting in the best interests of the people of Canada.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

An hon. Member: This government?

Mr. Blais: We have not abandoned our responsibilities, and we have not abandoned the principle of the adversary system in our parliamentary structure or, indeed, in our federal-provincial negotiations.

[Translation]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Boulanger): Order, please. I am sorry to interrupt the hon. member, but the time allotted to him is now expired.

[English]

Does the hon. member rise for the purpose of asking a question?

Mr. Stevens: No, Mr. Speaker; on three questions of privilege.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Boulanger): We will listen to one at a time.

Mr. Stevens: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member for Nipissing (Mr. Blais), first of all, indicated that I had engaged in a filibuster. I want to say most emphatically that I feel that statement was completely without foundation. This debate has not even been going three hours, and I would emphasize that I was simply the first speaker on the amendment proposed by the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles). I did not even take my full 20 minutes as the hon. member did.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Boulanger): I regret to say this, but the hon. member will know that this is not a question of privilege; it is a question of opinion on what was said. The hon. member rises on another question of privilege?

Mr. Stevens: Yes, Mr. Speaker. The hon. member indicated that I may have shares in Imperial Oil. I want to

[Mr. Blais.]

assure this House that I do not have shares in Imperial Oil. I wish to assure this House that my family did not have the good fortune which the Trudeau family had, and have a fortune spring from Imperial Oil.

Mr. Andrew Brewin (Greenwood): Mr. Speaker, I was not a member of the committee to which this bill that we are reporting was referred. This is probably just as well because I must say that, while I found the revelations of what took place in the committee extremely interesting and would have liked to hear more about them, I am afraid the discussions of the internal details of the committee are obscuring an important point of principle which is raised by the amendment moved by my colleague. The important point of principle is one that I think we have to settle and that is whether the other place, a non-elected body, is the appropriate group to have the responsibility of determining whether an emergency of the type described in the measure exists in this country. I say emphatically that it is not; that a non-elected body is not an appropriate tribunal or authority for determining the existence of an emergency.

It would be absolutely unthinkable, after the government of this country, the executive, had determined that there was in fact a national emergency, and a matter which required extraordinary action and that decision had been upheld or approved by a motion of the elected members of this House of Commons, that this body which has no jurisdiction in this matter unless we choose to give it, the other place, should be given the responsibility of overriding a decision on this matter of the executive of the country and the decision of the House of Commons composed of elected members. It is no insult whatever to the other place. It is not quite correct to say that they are unrepresentative. They do represent certain interests. A number of directorships are held by members of the other place. I will not go into details, but it is well known that they represent a particular point of view. I, for one, other members of my party and, I hope, members of the House generally, do not accept the proposition that we should give to the other place the right to veto the will of the elected members of the House of Commons.

● (1750)

The principle embodied in motion No. 4—I am not talking of the amendment as a whole—is an advance. I was in the House when the War Measures Act was invoked by a decision of the executive. Their power to do that has been upheld by the courts on innumerable occasions. They are the authority which primarily determines the existence of the emergency. In that situation we, in this House, were asked to express our views as to whether an emergency existed. I was one of those who voted against the invocation of the War Measures Act, because I did not think that such an emergency existed as would justify the complete abolition of the constitution and the withdrawal of all the rights and liberties of the people. This is what was involved in any declaration that the War Measures Act had been invoked and was in force.

I submit that the elected branch of Parliament in which I am now speaking, the House of Commons, should have the right to pass judgment on whether the very strong powers—they need to be strong in an emergency—to be conferred by this statute are justified by the existence of a