

Petroleum Statistics

energy was not in our discussions. It raised no questions, supplies seemed inexhaustible, and all of sudden we find out that there might be a shortage of energy. Last Friday, the minister reminded us in his speech that in the United States last year, as a result of a very severe winter and perhaps a miscalculation on the part of certain networks of distribution, schools and plants had to be closed in many U.S. cities, particularly in eastern cities where fuel had to be allocated for heating homes and hospitals. That allowed us to realize how dependent we are on oil energy in both the United States and Canada, and just a few minutes earlier the hon. member for Nanaimo-Cowichan-The Islands (Mr. Douglas) pointed out that not so long ago Canada was a net exporter of cheap oil, and we are now becoming an importer of high cost oil.

I think there is nothing good about this, and it is important to know what our energy supplies are in Canada, where there are chances of finding oil and natural gas supplies on the Canadian territory. I think surveys have been made, some are now under way and others will have to be made. I do not think that in a country as vast as Canada we have looked everywhere, we have surveyed everywhere to find sources of energy. There are still many areas to be explored to find oil supplies in Canada.

Mr. Speaker, controlling the expenditures made by oil corporations for the search for and development of new energy sources means knowing how the oil companies intend to spend the dollars they receive from Canadian consumers. We often see on television or in newspapers advertisements telling the Canadian consumer: Consume now and pay later. Travel now and pay later. For the past few years, in the case of the sale of petroleum products, the opposite has been done. The consumer has been told: Pay right now to enable the oil companies to accumulate profits in order to search for oil, and presumably to make it available to the consumers. The oil companies did not want to operate the way finance companies ask us to do, namely to commit ourselves financially to search for oil deposits and put them on the market. On the contrary, through the government, they have compelled the consumers to pay for those oil products in advance and at ever growing prices in order to be able to carry out petroleum exploration.

When I hear the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources (Mr. Gillespie) telling this House that the aim of these half-yearly increases in oil product prices is to curb the consumption of such products among the population, I say this is a joke of monumental proportions, because the minister knows quite well that the Canadian consumer has definite needs. He has habits which he will not give up, and the minister knows quite well that the rate of oil product consumption will go on as before.

In short, Mr. Speaker, I contend that these petroleum price increases really aim at allowing oil companies to accumulate ever growing profits in order first to satisfy the shareholders of these companies and only then, as I mentioned earlier, to invest in exploration. Yet one often wonders whether this exploration is actually done where it should be and why the announcement of the results, is always made at times which

[Mr. Laprise.]

are advantageous to these oil companies, for instance on the eve of petroleum product shortages.

I am convinced that, since the time explorations were started just about everywhere, oil companies already know places where oil deposits can be found. Yet they delay the public disclosure of the result of these explorations, at least at the government's level. So, Mr. Speaker, if this Bill C-12 aims at allowing the government to know those places where oil can be found, it will be for the greater good of the government and the Canadian people.

For some years, explorations have been carried out in certain Arctic islands, namely King Christian and the Melville Islands. Explorations have also been carried out to determine the most economical or the shortest way to transport the natural gas found in these islands to the places where it will be used. Yet, according to information in my possession, it seems that these natural gas deposits found in these Arctic islands would be sent to the eastern United States or eastern Canada, mainly to the province of Quebec where a supply in natural gas is most needed.

Here is what *La Frontière* reported under date of November 15, 1972:

Natural gas, an important element in industrialization, represents only 4 per cent of Quebec's energy, while in Ontario, it reaches 20 per cent. The overall percentage for Canada is 22 per cent.

Needless to say, therefore, it is most important that the province of Quebec should find a source of supplies in one of the finds of natural gas recently made in the Arctic islands. Still, according to the planned route which has just been published, it seems that the pipeline will run through the west, through Hudson Bay, across the Northwest Territories, part of northern Manitoba and Ontario, and then reach the existing pipeline; it seems this gas is intended only for the eastern United States, market, at a time, when Canada is in urgent need of natural gas for its own development.

I therefore ask the minister to have a close look at the natural gas needs of the province of Quebec, the route planned to take the Arctic gas to eastern Canada and the eastern states, to make sure that the industrialized part of Quebec is not overlooked in terms of those sources of gas in the Arctic islands, which, being Canadian sources should serve the Canadian people first. As for surpluses, we do not object to their being exported to our friends south of the border.

I insist on that last point with the minister: the situation warrants a very close look.

● (1602)

[English]

Mr. Gordon Ritchie (Dauphin): Mr. Speaker, there are one or two matters I would like to discuss with regard to this bill. It is a fairly innocuous bill, but it begs the question: does an industry have to invest in itself? Does this bill mean that because oil companies make money on oil and gas they should be required by law to invest in their own industry? If so, should they invest in solar energy, nuclear energy, or in the coal industry? A good many American companies are diversi-