

Energy Supplies

Mr. Walter Baker (Grenville-Carleton): Mr. Speaker, on the last submission of the minister, I think he should indeed seek an opinion. He did not answer the question put by the hon. member. I think the hon. member for Nanaimo-Cowichan-The Islands (Mr. Douglas) has a point here.

I want to deal with one matter raised by the minister, namely his view that our party is opposed to Petro-Can, which he called "a significant policy instrument in Canadian imports". What is the meaning of the word "significant"? How is this instrument, Petro-Can, more significant than any other instrument available to the Canadian government?

For years and years the Canadian Commercial Corporation has been available to the government for the purpose of acquiring—acquiring supplies of oil, acquiring this, acquiring that.

Mr. Munro (Esquimalt-Saanich): Take supply and services for instance.

Mr. Baker (Grenville-Carleton): The Canadian Commercial Corporation has been in existence for years. I would ask hon. members to look at the objects of that corporation and see whether it does not allow it to do things that the government wishes done by Petro-Can. That power has existed for a long time. I would assume that the Canadian Commercial Corporation is a very "significant" corporation with respect to purchases.

In an aside, the hon. member for Esquimalt-Saanich (Mr. Munro) mentioned the action taken by Mr. Goyer when he was minister of supply and services. Without the benefit of a corporation he managed to import a large amount of oil. Of course, he suffered from a congenital inability to distinguish between good oil and bad oil, but that is not the issue. The issue is that he did without the benefit of a corporation like Petro-Can; Petro-Can did not even exist at that time, of course. The point is that the Government of Canada is the ultimate authority, or should be, not some Crown agency.

It occurs to us to wonder why it is necessary to put all the cards on the Petro-Can table when in fact the Government of Canada has the ultimate power. If it is important to Venezuela, if it is important to Mexico, if it is important to other countries in the world to deal on a government to government basis, why not deal on a government to government oil company basis with those countries? If the minister is trying to argue that the government of Venezuela will deal only with Petro-Can, I cannot accept that; I believe the government of Venezuela would be delighted to deal with the Government of Canada.

When the minister says that this is only an instrument but an instrument which we must have or the country suffers, then I say he has strayed far from the facts. This may be because he lacks the knowledge or sees a little politics in the issue.

There is another matter which I want to deal with very quickly. With or without Petro-Can, in the absence of a system that can lead us to self-sufficiency in this country, can the minister make any guarantees that we will be free from

[Mr. Gillespie.]

break-up or interruption of importation? The answer is no. With or without Petro-Can, is the government prepared to say, as I asked in the course of the debate on Petro-Can, that those in this country who depend on imported oil can rely on an appropriate price? The government has not said that. The question was asked recently by the Leader of the Opposition but it was evaded. The minister cannot give that kind of assurance and, if he did, he would be misleading the House.

The situation is the same whether we are dealing with or without Petro-Can. From what I have heard in this House from the minister and others, competition for supply governs price. Who in this House, including the minister, is prepared to say that there will be a certain price or a certain supply with or without Petro-Can? Certainly not the minister; he knows that much.

It is important that we understand and that the minister understand that Petro-Can certainly can be an instrument to import, but to put it ahead, in terms of its resources, of the Government of Canada, to put it ahead of the Canadian Commercial Corporation, or to put it ahead of the minister, is, I suggest, stretching credibility to the utmost.

Mr. Gillespie: Are you dealing with the amendment?

Mr. Danson: This is the worst House leader we have ever had.

Mr. Baker (Grenville-Carleton): As the minister knows, last Friday we were prepared to have this matter completed but the hon. member for Fort William (Mr. McRae) got into the act and extended the debate, much to the chagrin of the minister. I ask the minister to examine the course of the debate in order to ensure that he does not mislead himself, and therefore mislead the House, on the number of speakers. I think it is important that the House and the country know that this bill was held up in committee for two full days.

PROCEEDINGS ON ADJOURNMENT MOTION

[Translation]

SUBJECT MATTER OF QUESTIONS TO BE DEBATED

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ethier): It is my duty, pursuant to Standing Order 40, to inform the House that the questions to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment are as follows: the hon. member for Vancouver-Kingsway (Mrs. Holt)—Canadian Radio-Television and Telecommunications Commission—Representation on commission; the hon. member for Dauphin (Mr. Ritchie)—Official Languages—Alleged improper designation of "bilingual"; the hon. member for Broadview (Mr. Rae)—Health and Welfare—Funding of medical care program.