

*Energy Supplies*

oil, but it is just not going to affect Canada and there is no reason why we should prepare against this eventuality.

Against that complacent, short-sighted, irresponsible attitude, the opposition has also taken a relaxed attitude with respect to the process of this bill. They have felt that they could eat up valuable time in the House as they have done. We spent over one week on the report stage, which in itself is quite unusual particularly as we dealt with many of the same amendments in the committee stage and disposed of those amendments during that stage.

However, they reintroduced these amendments, particularly amendment No. 2, on which we spent three days. We spent another day or so on three other amendments introduced by the hon. member for Peace River (Mr. Baldwin) which, as the hon. member for Sault Ste. Marie (Mr. Symes) pointed out, if they had been accepted, would have subverted the very intention of the bill itself. They would have removed power from the emergency supplies allocation board and emasculated the ability of the board to deal with an emergency in Canada created outside of Canada by a revolution in Iran, by events in the Middle East, or by OPEC actions which might be related to the recent events in the Middle East.

Canada has solemn treaty obligations under the International Emergency Agency which the official opposition has never faced up to. Those solemn treaty obligations require us, as a nation, to institute demand restraint policies and programs in the event that the International Energy Agency, through its emergency oil-sharing arrangement, decides that there has been a reduction of 7 per cent in the consumption of the member countries or for any one particular country—and that is important—or any one identifiable region within any one particular country.

If consumption of oil is reduced by 7 per cent as a result of a shortfall of supplies, which could mean a reduction of imports in any one country or any region, then the international energy emergency oil-sharing arrangement could be activated for all 19 members of the International Energy Agency. As hon. members know, we are now very close to that number. At the present time the shortage as a result of the revolution in Iran is equivalent to about 5 per cent of world oil consumption. Having gone from zero to a 5 per cent reduction in the few months since Iran cut off production in late December, it does not seem to me that it requires any great stretch of the imagination to see how, if that could happen in three months, it is quite possible we could be faced with a situation where reduction in world consumption would be close to 7 per cent, or that it could be in any one country such as, for example, Japan, which is a very exposed country. If that one country were exposed, it would have the right, under the articles of association of the International Energy Agency, to ask the agency to apply the emergency oil-sharing arrangement. As a country, we would have to comply with these treaty obligations and Canadians would want us to do so. The only way it could be done, however, is with the powers given in this bill. That is why it is so important to the government that we proceed with dispatch.

[Mr. Gillespie.]

● (2010)

The bill was introduced for second reading debate over a month ago, and I submit it has received more than sufficient attention. Indeed, it has been subjected to a great deal of delaying tactics. As I pointed out, when one looks at the history of the opposition with respect to energy measures, that is not surprising. They have never regarded a policy position on energy as important for Canada. Historically they have taken the view that we could let somebody else decide—perhaps the province of Alberta. That has been the position of the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Clark). He has not addressed himself to any one of the series of important energy questions.

In this debate we have once again seen that complacent attitude. It has been manifested by the energy critic of the official opposition, the hon. member for Northumberland-Durham (Mr. Lawrence). He has taken the attitude which in an energy crisis would be to say, "Let the multinationals do it. Let Exxon decide what is best for us." On this side of the House we are not prepared to accept that kind of an attitude.

I have gone over the reasons for the bill, Mr. Speaker, and the possibility, indeed the increasing probability, of having to use the measures in the bill in a shorter period of time than one might have speculated even a few weeks ago.

Hon. members will have read in the press about the situation in the United States and the measures that President Carter will be placing before Congress. Congress will address those measures very shortly as they consider how to deal with the important demand restraint obligation they have. They are looking at the possibility of closing down service stations on Sundays and, if that is not sufficient, they may have to close them down for whole weekends as well. One can see the series of events which could be triggered by this kind of move and which could impact on Canada.

There are significant powers in this bill, Mr. Speaker. There is no question about that. It contains arbitrary powers. It is our contention that that is the only way to deal with an emergency which this bill is designed to take care of. These powers are, in one form or another, conditioned. They are necessary to discharge the purposes of the bill but they can only be used in an emergency. They can only be used to achieve these ends.

There are a number of built-in safeguards and controls. For example, parliamentary approval will be needed for the declaration of an emergency and the authorization of the mandatory allocation program as set out in clause 11(3). The mandatory allocation program will lapse each year. It can be authorized for no longer than a year and, at the end of that year, it will automatically lapse and have to be initiated by the government again. That measure will have to be placed before parliament. Approval will have to be sought and given before the mandatory allocation program can continue after one year. There are significant safeguards built in to the mandatory allocation program and the declaration for emergency energy purposes.