

Energy Supplies

[English]

ENERGY SUPPLIES EMERGENCY ACT, 1979

MEASURE TO CONSERVE STOCKS

The House resumed from Friday, March 16, consideration of the motion of Mr. Gillespie that Bill C-42, to provide a means to conserve the supplies of energy within Canada during periods of national emergency caused by shortages or market disturbances affecting the national security and welfare and the economic stability of Canada, as reported (with amendments) from the Standing Committee on National Resources and Public Works, and motion No. 5 (Mr. Symes).

Mr. Harvie Andre (Calgary Centre): Mr. Speaker, when I called it four o'clock on Friday I was nearing the completion of my remarks. However, today I was preceded by a motion put by the minister. I find it almost beyond belief that the government would institute closure at this point in time. I do not think I am giving away a confidence when I inform the House that we were quite prepared to pass this bill last Tuesday had the government co-operated on one item, that of not insisting upon closure. Now we have closure to institute closure on a bill which, according to the government of Ontario, would, and I quote:

—convert the modestly endowed Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources into a king of energy. It would grant him absolute and dictatorial powers that are wholly foreign to Canadian practice . . . in times of war. And these dictatorial powers and managerial responsibilities will be exercised by a minister and a board who have no background in such management.

That is the nature of the legislation. We ask one thing, that closure not be put in the bill which would prevent a future parliament from debating the order of the governor in council should these dictatorial powers be assumed. That is all we ask. We ask no closure in the legislation. The minister could have had the bill last Tuesday. We now have closure to implement closure, which is a despicable act by a minister who, besides being modestly endowed, has no respect for democracy and our democratic procedures.

● (1550)

Before closing off this portion of my remarks, I wish to put on the record of this House some comments made in the Standing Committee on National Resources and Public Works on March 1, as recorded in issue No. 5 of the proceedings of that committee. The hon. member for Sault Ste. Marie (Mr. Symes) was questioning the minister. I quote from the final part of his question which I think catches the essence of it. The hon. member suggested:

—that Petro-Canada should make the direct contractual link with countries such as Venezuela in terms of oil supply rather than a subsidiary who has to take orders from a parent outside of Canadian control.

The Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources (Mr. Gillespie) replied as follows:

To suggest—as you may be suggesting or as some of your colleagues have suggested—that Petro-Canada should be the exclusive and sole importing agency for all crude oil would be, it seems to me, to bring about an impossible situation for the Canadian national oil company. I cannot think of a way which would at the present time, at any rate, probably discredit the national oil

[Mr. Speaker.]

company of Canada more than asking it to do something which is technically beyond its competence at the present time.

I am not at all sure that in the longer period one should look towards an exclusive importing arrangement. I think it would be far too complicated. I think we should recognize that there are some situations, particularly where crude from the eastern hemisphere is involved, where the international pooling arrangements are to Canada's advantage as long as the Canadian subsidiary and Canadian companies have an access to that, because they can hedge the insecurities associated with middle eastern, eastern hemisphere crude.

On March 1 the minister said to the committee that Petro-Canada lacks the competence to negotiate deals with foreign companies. The minister said it would be a mistake to cut us off from these international pools since it gives us a hedge that is to Canada's benefit. That was the minister's view on March 1. That is the view this party has been talking about throughout this debate.

Somehow between March 1 and a week later the minister said that may be the fact, that maybe in reality Petro-Canada does lack the competence and that we would be putting ourselves in jeopardy in cutting ourselves off from these international pooling arrangements, but in terms of politics it looks good. He said he was going to forget all of the logic, reason and wisdom and pursue the political path. If that damaged the country in the long run, it would not matter to him because we would have an election under our belts by that time.

That was basically the position of the minister in that regard. The fact that it is an irresponsible position is hardly surprising since we are dealing with an irresponsible minister who demonstrated his irresponsibility by moving closure, rule 75C, a few minutes ago. It was a despicable act by a despicable minister.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Turner): Is the House ready for the question?

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): What about the minister?

Mr. Gillespie: I intend to participate on this particular amendment, but not at this point.

Mr. T. C. Douglas (Nanaimo-Cowichan-The Islands): Mr. Speaker, it is amazing that, an amendment having been moved by the hon. member for Sault Ste. Marie (Mr. Symes) on behalf of the New Democratic Party, the official opposition having stated their position on it in two speeches, the minister, who would be expected to express the government's point of view, remains in his seat. I know the minister wants to hurry the legislation through and we certainly have no intention of prolonging the debate, but surely this House and the country have a right to know where the minister stands with regard to this amendment. The minister knows perfectly well that if he stays seated long enough and lets everyone else speak, he will be able to close the debate with no opportunity provided for members on this side to answer him without appearing to obstruct the debate, the very thing he is trying to avoid by moving a motion of closure.

The purpose of the amendment moved by the hon. member for Sault Ste. Marie is quite clear and specific. Under this