

Energy Supplies

that it owns in terms of oil tankers, will be jacking up the price all the way along because of the vertical integration and the way these corporations operate. If Canada had one sole importing agency responsible to the Government of Canada, namely, Petro-Canada, we could get an accurate idea of supply and of what the real cost is. In that way we would protect the Canadian consumer.

It seems to me the lessons of the past few weeks and the lessons of the oil crisis of 1973 indicate that as long as we rely on the multinational oil companies, we, as Canadian consumers, will be jeopardized. We have been ripped off in terms of price and supply problems in the past. Anyone who remembers the famous lineups of cars at gasoline pumps in the United States during 1973 will recognize that much of that situation was contrived. The oil companies had the capacities in their oil refineries but deliberately kept production down to create an artificial shortage which created not only panic in the United States but helped to drive up the price as well. In light of that kind of history of manipulation, surely it becomes imperative that we give a bigger role to our own publicly owned national petroleum company.

To paraphrase the minister that he would like to eliminate the middleman, Exxon, in Imperial's deals with Venezuela in contracting oil for Canada, I would like to eliminate the other middleman eventually, namely, Imperial Oil itself, and use Petro-Canada as the importing agency to buy, and then in turn sell, oil to the refineries in Canada. It is not an impractical suggestion. It could be worked almost in the sense of a marketing board as we have in other product areas in Canada. It could almost be a paper transaction kind of situation. I would hope eventually we could move into the actual physical aspect of the operation that Petro-Canada could contract for tankers to move the oil. There is excessive tanker capacity in the world today, so that should not be any problem.

It seems to me that my amendment makes sense in that it gives the government an option in terms of the legislation. I stress this is not a compulsory amendment, but an option. It gives the government some authority if it wants to move in the direction of giving a greater role to Petro-Canada. I know the Liberals only move toward enhancing Crown corporations and the government's role in these areas when they are pushed right to the wall. I would hope that the government would take the initiative and try to prepare for crises, rather than having to react so rapidly when a crisis develops.

In the sense of propping up and giving the government some courage that there will not be any challenges to the role of Petro-Canada, I have moved this amendment to incorporate in the legislation the clear option that it can make Petro-Canada, in an emergency, the sole importer of offshore oil.

● (1520)

I think the arguments I have put forward in the context of our energy history, and the most recent developments, indicate we must have this very viable opinion, a full utilization of Petro-Canada. Otherwise we could not solve this recurring crisis facing Canadians in terms of manipulation of the oil

market by multinational oil companies. Those companies do not have loyalty to any one country or to the populace of any country, only to themselves and their maximization of profit.

I commend my amendment to the House. I know in committee the minister was not favourably disposed toward it. That was before Mr. Armstrong of Imperial Oil announced that he would ignore the demands of the minister with regard to having Imperial act directly with Venezuela rather than through Exxon. The minister has been given a slap in the face by Imperial on two counts. First, he said that Imperial must deal directly with Venezuela. He has been turned down. Second, the minister said that any diversion of oil by Imperial was unacceptable. He has been turned down on that ground as well because Imperial is still diverting about 9,000 barrels a day.

In light of this most recent history I think the minister will see the wisdom of my amendment, change his opinion, and accept it. I therefore commend it to the House.

Mr. Allan Lawrence (Northumberland-Durham): Mr. Speaker, because this is the minister's bill I thought he might want to reply to the mover of the amendment. In the event that he does not, I would like to take a few short minutes of the time of the House.

What the NDP amendment does is suggest, as usual, one of two crutches that a socialist party anywhere has. First, if they do not like what is going on, they want it nationalized. This was even the attitude a few weeks ago of some NDP members of the House when we were discussing Air Canada and CNR. They almost forgot themselves and cried out that if we nationalized both of those, it would be the answer to everything. That is their answer on the post office problem—nationalize the Post Office and that will cure everything.

The other cure that they come up with is some sort of statement on organization. If anything is going wrong and if you cannot nationalize it, or if it is against the popular will, their simplistic view is to set up a state run organization of some type or other to cure all the little ailments. It is very depressing to see a minister of the Crown in what used to be a Liberal party, parrot and mimic that type of approach all down the line. Certainly Canada has a crude oil or energy problem. It is as a result of a lack of a decent policy. In desperation the government reaches over and starts to parrot and mimic socialists by saying that the answer to all our prayers has to be Petro-Can.

I wish to point something out to the House. This amendment calls for Petro-Canada to be the sole, only, and exclusive importer of offshore oil in times of an emergency. The idea is that Petro-Can would apparently be in a better position than anyone in government or industry to ensure that we get our continuing share of crude oil from offshore. Presumably because the minister has now agreed to insert Petro-Can into the allocations basis, Petro-Can will have an immense part to play in regard to the allocation of that crude oil domestically to refineries. I merely point out one conflict of interest of Petro-Can in that event. If Petro-Can is merely a state oil