

THE ROYAL ASSENT

[English]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: It is my duty to inform the House that a communication has been received which reads as follows:

Government House
Ottawa

March 16, 1979

Sir:

I have the honour to inform you that His Excellency the Governor General of Canada will proceed to the Senate Chamber today, the 16th day of March, at 4.15 p.m. for the purpose of giving Royal Assent to a bill.

I have the honour to be,
Sir,
Your obedient servant,
Edmond Joly de Lotbinière
Administrative Secretary
to the Governor General

● (1410)

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

ENERGY SUPPLIES EMERGENCY ACT, 1979

MEASURE TO CONSERVE STOCKS

The House resumed consideration of 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 motions Nos. 3, 4 and 6 (Mr. Lawrence, for Mr. Baldwin).

Hon. Alastair Gillespie (Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources and Minister of State for Science and Technology): Mr. Speaker, I would like briefly to address myself to the three amendments standing in the name of the hon. member for Peace River (Mr. Baldwin). There has been lengthy discussion on the amendment proposed by the hon. member for Northumberland-Durham (Mr. Lawrence), and in that discussion the concern expressed by the opposition was that parliament would not have a sufficient opportunity to consider the declaration of an emergency for the purpose of this legislation, nor would it have an opportunity to approve such a declaration, which declaration would call upon the energy supplies allocation board to establish a mandatory allocation program.

I think it has been shown that the measures taken by the government in providing three days for debate are better than the alternative of using Standing Order 33 suggested by the

Energy Supplies

opposition House leader, which would require two days. There was some reference by the right hon. member for Prince Albert (Mr. Diefenbaker) to the possibility of using Standing Order 75C. The advice I have received is that that particular measure would not be available to us and that Standing Order 33 would have to be used, which in an emergency one would anticipate would provide only two days of debate, not three.

Throughout this debate with respect to these amendments and the rights of parliament there has been a very obvious misunderstanding on the part of the opposition with respect to the nature of an emergency and the ways by which parliament and, indeed, the government of the day, must deal with such an emergency. There has been little recognition that in an emergency a government must deal and must be able to deal with a sure hand. It cannot contemplate weeks of uncertainty. That would be the effect of these three amendments. If adopted, they would introduce weeks of uncertainty at a time when an emergency had been declared and when a mandatory allocation program was being established.

Amendments to that mandatory allocation program would be approved by order of the governor in council. The review process which the hon. member for Peace River wants to put in place would introduce an extraordinary element of inflexibility in amendments to the mandatory allocation program described in clause 12(4) on page 9 of the bill. It would have the effect of introducing uncertainty at the very time when we would want to introduce certainty into an extremely complicated administrative process. It would be a complicated process because it would be dealing with energy which includes crude oil products and the energies associated with that which pervade the basis of our economy. It would deal with the production and consumption parts of the process.

Hon. members will realize that a mandatory allocation program which the energy supplies allocation board would have to produce would deal with such things as designating the regions in which the program would operate. I am referring now to clause 12(2) of the bill. A mandatory allocation program would designate the regions in which the program would operate, if it was not to operate in the whole of Canada. The program would specify the petroleum products, the supplies of which would be controlled under the program. It would set out the priorities of use of the controlled product.

Clause 13 deals with the allocation of alternative fuels. The mandatory allocation program would deal with a number of basic elements, regions, geographical areas, products, alternative fuels and priorities. There are three levels of priorities, and those priorities have been established through discussions with the provinces, but it is quite possible that there could be a large number of amendments to the mandatory allocation program as a result of representations by, for example, the provinces, consumer groups, producer groups or transportation groups.

If these amendments were to be adopted, their effect would be to hamstring significantly the ability of the energy supplies allocation board to deal with amending orders in a way which would introduce a degree of certainty and a sense of urgency