

Oil and Petroleum

Mr. Horner: Mr. Chairman, if I may speak on the point of order, I find it amazing to note that although the minister presented to the committee some 32 pages of amendments, he now says there are to be more amendments. Quite probably he will present even more on Monday.

Mr. Hamilton (Qu'Appelle-Moose Mountain): Mr. Chairman, I am trying to do what is obviously in our best interests. We have become involved in a strong political argument, and that is good, but we have work to do. We should be aware of the contents of the amendments. I suggest, after the hon. member for Sault Ste. Marie has spoken—I understand he is next—that the minister might stand up and explain some of the amendments he will propose. That will help us in discussing the very serious points at issue here.

The Deputy Chairman: The Chair will not raise objections to the hon. member's suggestion. We are discussing clause 2. With the unanimous consent of the committee the minister can be allowed to refer to other clauses and to amendments. Is that the unanimous wish of the committee?

● (2030)

Mr. Hamilton (Qu'Appelle-Moose Mountain): I have a correction, Mr. Chairman. All I want to do is use the same precedent I used earlier. The minister can take some of these amendments and explain them, but he cannot move them during this discussion on clause 2. If he wants to explain some of these amendments which are of a technical nature, we can still stay on this clause. He can then table them so we have them on the record and can study them over the weekend.

The Deputy Chairman: I appreciate the point the hon. member for Qu'Appelle-Moose Mountain is making, because we did that in the case of certain amendments that he brought to the attention of the committee. That, of course, was done with agreement. The only point the Chair is making is that this can only be done if the committee so agrees.

Mr. Symes: Mr. Chairman, I rise on the same point of order. I find that highly irregular from the point of view that the minister would be the only one speaking to the amendments today. This is why I say we need the opportunity to have an exchange. I think it would be better to follow the normal practice.

The Deputy Chairman: Consent has not been given.

Mr. Symes: Mr. Chairman, I have a series of questions for the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources. He might take note of them as I go along, and answer when I have finished.

As I mentioned last night, we cannot look at this bill in isolation. We must look at it in the context of the National Energy Board report and the problem of supply and demand. I wish to sound out the minister on his views of partially meeting our supply problem by means of a method of conservation. The minister talked about the federal government introducing an energy conservation

program. I would like him to elaborate on that, and answer some of the questions I will be putting to him.

In its most recent report the National Energy Board predicts an annual demand growth rate for oil at 3.2 per cent over the next 20 years. I find that rather low considering the historical growth rate in the demand for oil. Perhaps the minister can elaborate on how they arrived at that figure.

It is predicted there will be a shortage by 1982 and we will have to become a net importer. This not only means a problem of supply. Studies indicate that the world supply situation will be very tight in the early 1980's. The cost of foreign oil will probably be higher. In light of our tight supply situation in the next few years, it seems advisable for the government to begin now to institute a strong oil conservation program.

The energy demand growth rate for all forms of energy during the fifties was 4 per cent per year. In the sixties it was up to 5.5 per cent per year. The trend is to increased demand, rather than a levelling off as predicted by the National Energy Board over the next 20 years.

Have the minister and the government developed a conservation program embodying some of the following points? If we are to reduce consumption of fuel in Canada because of our tight supply situation, there should be a revision of the building codes to demand more insulation in our homes and office buildings. Has the minister discussed revising the national building code with his colleague, the Minister of State for Urban Affairs, with Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation, or any other institutions involved, with a view to upgrading insulation standards for buildings across Canada in order to conserve fuel?

Second, has the government considered more mass transit systems in Canada, with a view to getting people away from using automobiles for their transportation to work and getting them to use train and bus systems? I know the budget imposed a tax on high energy consuming cars. However, most of those cars are not used by the average Canadian. They are a minority. Therefore, it will not affect automobile fuel consumption very much.

The Minister of Transport is very anxious to go ahead with his short take-off and landing program, STOL, emphasizing airplanes over rapid trains and buses. We know that in terms of passenger miles planes require 10 times as much fuel as buses, and six times as much fuel as trains. In light of the energy supply situation, has the minister urged the Minister of Transport to press ahead with mass ground transportation plans rather than STOL aircraft and similar programs?

Third, has the federal government taken any initiatives in urging provincial governments to reduce highway speed limits to 50 miles an hour? I believe only British Columbia has done this. I point out to the minister that by driving a car at 50 miles an hour rather than 70 miles an hour, there is a saving of 15 to 25 per cent in gas consumption.

Fourth, has the minister considered and will he urge the Canadian public to turn down their thermostats in homes and office buildings? By the way, do government offices still have their thermostats set at 68 degrees as was the