

Canada Oil and Gas Act

underlying factor in everything we advocated in this House and throughout Canada was our deep belief in the individual Canadian citizen. I deeply believe that the average individual in my constituency of Pembina can prosper in Canada, but the average constituent should be offered initiatives by his federal government so that he can own his own home and participate directly in the development of our resources. I hope hon. members opposite will realize the wisdom of that attitude and of offering initiatives rather than always relying on government intervention.

Quite frankly, I am glad an agreement was reached between the federal government and the province of Alberta because at least the uncertainty that existed was removed. However, I find it frustrating that the party opposite was the party which campaigned on cheap oil. Hon. members opposite told the Canadian people they would keep energy costs down. As a result of the agreement reached Canadians in reality are paying and will in the future pay more for oil products than what we advocated in our budget. For example, we agreed to the gradual increase in the price of our oil to 75 per cent of the world price. That was included in the agreement signed by the province of Alberta and the federal government, but that is only in effect with respect to old oil. The cost of new oil or oil found after January of 1981 will be allowed to rise to 100 per cent of the world price under the present agreement. That oil will cost the consumer much more. I find it very disheartening that simply for political expediency hon. members opposite made promises and built up the hopes and expectations of the Canadian people and then, after an election is over, they forget about their promises and renege on them totally.

Let me conclude by referring to what I said in my opening comments. I hope our friends opposite will realize the wisdom of offering not only small Canadian oil companies but all individuals throughout Canada opportunities for self-fulfilment and the opportunity to produce for themselves rather than always taking the government interventionist approach.

Mr. Benno Friesen (Surrey-White Rock-North Delta): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to speak about this legislation. I wish we did not have to do so. I wish the legislation was not before us, but it is part of the schedule and part of the menu the government has put before us, so we must address ourselves to it.

It has been a year since the National Energy Program was introduced. It is probably an indication of the popularity of this measure that a year after the program was introduced we are still debating one of its major features. It is probably time to sit back and take a look at what is happening in the legislative process of this program. As I consider the debate, it seems to me that pretty well everyone in this House has staked out his position. In some cases it appears that this is a dialogue of the deaf. We have all determined what we want to see, what we want to support and what we want to reject, and there is not very much listening going on any more in this debate.

● (1600)

That is true for the Liberal Party as well as for the Conservatives and NDP. All of us have solidified our position so much that we are not really hearing what other people are saying. It probably does not pay any more to listen because we know what they are going to say. We have such a staked-out ideological position that we can anticipate what the other party will say. There are no surprises.

That is not healthy for a good legislative debate. I wonder whether it is not time to take a look at the premise which ought to underlie legislation if it is to be good legislation. What is the premise? From the premise flows the principle which ought to undergird all of the provisions of legislation. The premise is that we want good legislation, good law. We have to decide whether the law that we are debating is good. For example, for a number of years I have promoted a private member's bill on parental kidnapping. The government has now adopted that legislation in Bill C-53.

Something that encouraged me to go ahead with that legislation was an experience I had in Toronto some years ago. A young lawyer was using the kidnapping provisions of the Criminal Code to counsel his clients on how to kidnap their own children and do so successfully under the Criminal Code. That provision in the Criminal Code is supposed to protect children. However, it was being used by counsel in order to abduct them. That is bad law and the sooner we get rid of it, the better.

The underlying premise of all legislation is that it ought to be good. Maybe we ought to look at a couple of principles which ought to be qualities of good legislation. Good legislation should first of all have the principle of universality in it. Good law should be able to endure and enjoy universal application. You cannot have good law if it is very specific and particular. It should apply as much as possible to any situation within the purview of that legislation.

Second, it should not be written to give selective attention to any one person or group of people. I am sure the civil libertarians in this House will agree with that. Law which is designed to give attention to one group is probably not good law.

It should not be written to punish or reward any one person or group of people. Nor should it endanger any one person or group. It ought to benefit the public as a whole. For example, when I first came to this chamber we were still dealing with legislation related to a specific divorce action, a person who wanted a divorce and the provincial legislation did not accommodate that divorce action taking place. I am sure, Mr. Speaker, you remember cases like that. That is not good law. I am glad we have changed the legislation in such a way that we do not have to deal with that any more. We should not be dealing with specific cases in that way. We ought to have universal legislation.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I have been listening attentively to the hon. member. This is report stage of the bill and two amendments have been grouped for debate. It appears to the