

Petro-Canada Act

future minister of energy, mines and resources with some flexibility and not require him to do something with which he may disagree. That is the purpose of this amendment.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Is the House ready for the question?

Some hon. Members: Question.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: All those in favour of the amendment please say yea.

Some hon. Members: Yea.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. Members: Nay.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: In my opinion the nays have it.

I declare the amendment defeated on division.

The question is now on amendment No. 4.

Mr. Jim Hawkes (Calgary West): Mr. Speaker, to really understand the implication of the clause it must be carefully read. The clause with which we are concerned, as it appears in this bill, allows a small group of appointed people—the board of directors of Petro-Canada and a couple of appointed ministers of the Crown—the ability to borrow money.

An hon. Member: Just like a corporation.

Mr. Hawkes: I heard a member from the NDP say, “The same as a private corporation.” Perhaps he should check with his party’s energy critic, because it is not the same. We moved a motion to restrict the borrowing of the corporation to the limits of its assets. That is the discipline of a private corporation. Money is lent to private corporations up to the amount of its assets, but what is provided for in this particular piece of legislation—which is quite disturbing and should be disturbing to every member in the House—is that there is a small group of appointed people who can borrow an unlimited amount of money.

Earlier, the House expressed its opinion that \$5,500 million of taxpayers’ money should be given in the form of equity to Petro-Canada. If we do not change this clause, that same board of directors, with the concurrence of a couple of appointed Cabinet ministers, will be able to borrow \$20 billion, \$40 billion or \$100 billion more. Do the members opposite realize that it is the Crown—

An hon. Member: The customers.

Mr. Hawkes: It is the taxpayers of the nation whose money is being put at risk, and no elected body has the power to stop that action. If there is one fundamental element to our system of government, it is that people who are to be taxed have the right to choose who shall do the taxing. They have the right to vote for one person rather than another in the expectation that the elected person has been given by them the power to tax. However, in the clause as it is in this bill, appointed people shall determine what taxes shall be paid in the future, and elected people will have no power, no responsibility and no authority to say whether they are right or wrong.

• (1630)

We on this side of the House in the Conservative Party of Canada think that that is dead wrong. Our kind of democracy exists and hopefully flourishes because one of its principles is that we have the power to elect those who will have the power to take things away from us, such as our freedom, in the sense of criminal law, and our money, in the sense of taxation law. Then, if the people we elect take our freedom or our money away from us, we can get rid of them at the next election and choose people who approach the world with a little more sensitivity and sense.

In Bill C-101 with regard to Petro-Canada, the government is seeking to give appointed people the authority to tax us in the future, because today the government borrows money without checking with us, the elected people, and makes us responsible for paying it back in the future, and we never have a say as to whether borrowing it was a good or a bad idea. If hon. members of the New Democratic Party think that appointed people should be able to tax Canadians, then let them have the courage to put it out in a pamphlet. Let them have the courage to go to the electorate and say, “Elected people should not have any responsibility for determining taxes. Hand it over to appointed people and let them decide what taxes we shall pay.” If we leave this piece of legislation alone, that will be the principle to which we agree.

All I am seeking to do in my amendment is to assert that that matter concerning this large amount of money which is to be borrowed today and paid back tomorrow by the taxpayers of this country should be brought to this chamber, to the Parliament of Canada, to the elected body, and be approved or rejected by the people who were elected to come here to approve or reject taxation.

Mr. Smith: That is what we are doing today.

Mr. Hawkes: The parliamentary secretary to the Liberal House leader shouts, “That is what we are doing today.” Well, if one believes that elected people are the only ones who should be allowed to tax, then one must vote for the amendment that I have proposed. If one shouts, “Nay”, then one is asserting that appointed people should be able to put the taxpayers at risk and should, in effect, be able to tax Canadians in the future. That is what a “Nay” means. A “Yea” means that this is a democracy and that elected people should be the only ones allowed to tax. A “Nay” means that elected people should be given power to tax. I urge every hon. member in this chamber to vote “Yea” for this amendment for that reason.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Is the House ready for the question?

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: All those in favour of the motion will please say yea.

Some hon. Members: Yea.