

Energy Supplies Emergency Act

power was not warranted. I do not think the government has satisfied the burden that is on it to show beyond all reasonable doubt, and I dare say in terms of the depth and the strength of the powers that it seeks, beyond a shadow of doubt that it needs these powers to look after the national good.

As a member of this parliament, this minority parliament, I am not content with this bill as it now stands because when parliament enacts this bill, at that instant the members of parliament who represent Canadians from all walks of life in all parts of Canada will have passed their legislative responsibility to a government that has proven itself not only to be faulty in judgment but one in love with the authority of government by order in council and one which, through the fireside chats by the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) and the statements in this House by all ministers, has shown itself to be on all sides of the energy question with respect to whether there is a crisis for Canadians this year or in the immediate future.

The burden upon the government to make out a case for these powers is even heavier in a minority parliament than it is in a parliament where a government would have a majority. It is particularly heavy on this government because the only thing that is propping it in office is a party known as the New Democratic Party, a party that left its principles a long time ago to moulder in the dust, whose members on the one hand say with all their honour that on some occasion they will oppose the government, and on the next occasion gather those incompetents opposite to their bosoms, to such an extent that the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources is able to announce to this House the colour of the eyes of the hon. member for York South (Mr. Lewis).

To measure the extent of the various positions of the government over the last few weeks, and how it has moved from this side to that side as to whether or not there is a crisis, one has only to hear and see how ministers have reacted to questions in this House. This should be an indication to all members of the House, including even the ciphers who support the government, that the government is running very close to the end of its string in terms of public trust.

I would like to direct the attention of the House to the government's record of vacillation and inconsistency that it has displayed in the matter of energy. The Prime Minister said on November 22:

Our current assessment is that oil rationing at the retail level will not be necessary. If Canadians generously support the voluntary program—and I know they will—there is every prospect that shortages can be minimized throughout this winter.

● (2100)

On September 20 of this year, on a television program, the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources said this:

In a sense, this is a passing situation in Canada because we've got new refinery construction under way which will be completed in the fall of next year, and further refinery construction will be completed in the year after.

Now, Mr. Speaker, you have this kind of optimism and pessimism. I ask you whether this is the kind of statement on which to base the far reaching and extraordinary powers for which the government is now asking.

[Mr. Baker.]

Again on October 16, 1973, the minister, when speaking to that society of which the Prime Minister is so fond, the Royal Society of Canada, said:

Comparing this Canadian situation with that of other developed nations of the world for example, Germany and Japan, we are not on the whole in too dangerous a situation. Compared to other nations Canada is in a relatively fortunate position.

On October 7, which is not so long ago, the minister said:

Well, Canadians have been more fortunate than many other people. In terms of shortages the government has been able to take action by way of export controls to make sure that Canadian refineries will continue to have supplies of oil to turn into gasoline, into heating oil, and also to make sure that there will be supplies of gasoline and heating oil throughout the year.

This latter statement, Mr. Speaker, was made less than two months ago by the minister who has now come here to ask this parliament to grant the government extraordinary powers to meet a crisis. I do not have to say that the Minister of Finance (Mr. Turner) got into the act. He has been keeping a relatively low profile for some time but he got into the energy act and not too long ago he said:

While we must be concerned . . . there is no justification at this time for panic or pessimism. Canada is in a much better position with regard to energy supplies than most other industrial countries.

There are some in this House who would say that this record of "on again off again on again Finnegan", which has characterized this government should be classed as a performance. But I think not, Mr. Speaker. What they have performed I believe is a tragedy, that is to instil in the minds of producers and consumers alike a sense of apprehensiveness and inconsistency that may or may not be justified—I do not believe this government really knows. In so doing, they have breached their public trust as a government.

It is interesting to note an article by Clyde Baxter which appeared in the *Financial Post* on December 15 1973 dated-lined Ottawa. I will quote part of the article which reads:

One senior federal minister bet a skeptical friend in industry a steak dinner and a good bottle of wine there would not be a national petroleum corporation—protesting all the while that he, after all, had the advantage.

Ten days later, Prime Minister Trudeau announced such an agency would be created.

Last week, on Wednesday, Energy Minister Donald Macdonald assured a meeting of Toronto investment analysts the price freeze on domestic oil would come off as planned January 31. One day later, Trudeau announced it wouldn't.

Mr. Macdonald (Rosedale): Mr. Speaker, I have a question of privilege.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The hon. Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources rises on a question of privilege.

Mr. Macdonald (Rosedale): Mr. Speaker, on a question of privilege, I have written to the editor of the *Financial Post* pointing out that this is a false story by Mr. Baxter so far as I am concerned.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Baker: That is an issue that the minister has chosen to take up with Mr. Baxter. Nonetheless, this article has been published. The minister was quite correct in adding that it may be false as far as he is concerned, but I think