

Energy Monitoring Act

exciting frontier areas. We are now about to continue that work. The energy monitoring act will give us the tools, through the already established Petroleum Monitoring Agency, to gather the information we need.

The act has been drafted in such a way as to avoid imposing reporting requirements on small firms; but in the interest of gathering the complete story, reporting requirements must be extended to the large new players in the game and must draw out facts and figures on a wide variety of subjects.

The energy monitoring bill is an important part of the legislative package before us. It will enable us carefully to monitor progress toward the major goals of the National Energy Program.

With these words, Mr. Speaker, I conclude by hoping that the legislation before the House can be disposed of efficiently and expeditiously.

Mr. G. M. Gurbin (Bruce-Grey): Mr. Speaker, I should like to begin by saying that I am sure members on all sides of the House share the minister's hopes for a happy future in Canada and would like to mark the milestone that was achieved on Saturday with that thought. I should add very quickly, though, that on this side of the House in particular, we hope that the kind of future we see for Canada is not the one which the minister and the government would give us with the sort of legislation presented today and the economic and energy planning we have had over the past two years. I do not think Canada can stand much more of that kind of planning if we are to have a future. I hope the government's successes will not be along the lines of the kind of legislation which has been passed to date over the last several years.

• (1520)

Bill C-106 is before us now. It is an interesting sequester from Bill C-94, the omnibus bill with which we were presented first. We might call this bill a "minibus" because it is really the bottom of the barrel. It has three different, separate and distinct parts to it, any of which in their own way could have a significant impact on the energy scene. I think each needs to be dealt with individually and looked at reasonably closely.

With each day the number of Canadians without jobs rises, with continued high interest rates and an increasing number of bankruptcies, all of which points to the lack of competence on the part of the Liberal government. The National Energy Program which should be called the Liberal energy program because the real question is whether national interests are being served by the program as it stands now.

Many difficulties have been created and not solved by this program in different regions and provinces. Most Canadians, if they had a chance to get an insight into the consequences of this whole program, would have serious reservations about it. Reservations about the oil industry have been there over the years with consumers feeling ripped off, etc. The main activator in the oil and gas industry has been the amount of exploration and development that has taken place and is a reason why western Canada has flourished. But this industry is feeling the first impact of the National Energy Program and is now being presented with yet another piece of legislation which will

influence directly the amount of control the federal government has over its day-to-day activities.

The first part of the program is the energy monitoring act. This bill as described by the minister will ostensibly allow the government to look at what is happening in the industry. But through a number of devices, it goes much further than that. I think there can be no argument that the federal government should know what is happening as far as energy related activity in the country is concerned. The real question is how much control will fall into the hands of the federal government. What is the government going to do with the information it receives? What will Bill C-106 accomplish?

What we have seen so far up to 1981 in terms of government involvement is the loss of 8,000 jobs in the energy exploration area in Alberta. I do not know if we have figures for the last several months but we can assume that trend will continue, at least for a while. That not only affects the people of Alberta but the economy of Canada as a whole. All this has been a direct result of the legislation thus far brought in—legislation which has also had a severe impact on consumers across Canada.

The National Energy Program has resulted in energy prices arrived at by the federal government, including large increases in federal taxation, that have caused a substantial increase in costs to consumers. These costs will continue in the years to come under the provisions of the bill so far described.

Let us look at the effect this monitoring agency will have. What has happened since the first part of the energy program came into being? The most recent figures show that oil well completions have dropped 25 per cent, exploration drilling has dropped 19 per cent and development drilling has dropped 28 per cent. All of these things have occurred because of increased government involvement in, and influence on, the oil and gas industry.

The minister spoke about the government not wanting to do anything but look at what was happening in the industry. But two specific things will happen. First, this bill requires any energy related industry in Canada—specifically oil and gas, although the minister has indicated that coal, uranium and thorium are also included—to give full disclosure of all activity, including financial statements, etc.

The amount of regulatory and other control which might come out of this process is of very great concern. There is provision in the bill for some smaller industries to be excluded, but that is not written in stone. The suggestion is that any industry could be required to conform. The amount of extra paper burden and work required by the industry in order to live up to the regulations provided by this type of bill are of serious concern to the industry. They are yet another blow to the ability of the smaller enterprises to continue. They are a very real concern to businessmen who would like to carry on business activity in Canada and be able to do it relatively free from the kind of government involvement implied by this bill if it goes through.