

Energy

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Lewis: Mr. Speaker, I spent a day visiting the Athabasca tar sands in Alberta last Thursday and I heard, particularly, from certain people representing Syncrude when our caucus met in Edmonton. At the request of the companies, the caucus met in private; neither visitors nor the press were there. I have learned, in the last little while, something that I did not know before, though perhaps others did.

An hon. Member: A one day expert!

Mr. Lewis: Perhaps the hon. member for Calgary South (Mr. Bawden) knows. I am sure he does. He knows everything about the oil corporations. And he is satisfied with the limits of that knowledge. I did not know that Syncrude was merely a conglomeration of four multinational corporations, namely Imperial, Gulf, Atlantic Richfield and City Services, which is—

• (1620)

Mr. Benjamin: A fine Canadian company.

Mr. Lewis: Yes, a fine Canadian company. I assumed that Syncrude was a company, since it was making all these noises and demands to be exempted from export controls, price controls, export tax and so on. I assumed it was a company that would do work and make profits. I assumed that, particularly since I heard the government and premier of Alberta tell the people of that province and of Canada that he had made a marvellous deal with Syncrude, because after some years the government of Alberta would get 50 per cent of the profits that Syncrude made.

Let me tell the House, Mr. Speaker, that that is not so. I have been informed that Syncrude is not going to make any profits; it is merely a contracting firm. It will do the work and at the end of every period, whether it be the end of a week, a month or three months, it will present these four corporations that make up this conglomeration with a bill. Thirty per cent of its expenses will go to Imperial, 30 per cent will go to Gulf, 30 per cent will go to Atlantic Richfield and 10 per cent to City Services. Then these four companies will pay Syncrude the amount of moneys that have been expended during that period, but the income of Syncrude will be zero. It will have expended x dollars and it will get x dollars from these four companies, but will have zero income.

As synthetic crude is produced from the tar sands, what will Syncrude do? It will put 30 per cent of the bitumen in tanks for Imperial, 30 per cent in tanks for Gulf, 30 per cent in tanks for Atlantic Richfield and 10 per cent in tanks for City Services. God alone knows who is going to make the profit or how it will be calculated. But these companies will have the right to handle the synthetic crude, to sell it anywhere they wish and at any price they like. If ever I have learned of determined attempt by four multinationals to hold Canada by the throat over new and important oil reserves, this Syncrude project is that.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Lewis: The Syncrude consortium has asked for various exemptions from the government. First, they asked

[Mr. Lewis.]

that those exemptions be given them by November 16. When they did not come forth, they extended the time by one month to December 16. I say to you, Mr. Speaker, that if the government is chicken enough to make these concessions to Syncrude, it will betray the interests of this country for generations to come.

As to the Mackenzie gas pipeline, I appreciate that a gas pipeline down the Mackenzie valley does not present the same ecological or environmental danger as an oil pipeline. But I still make two points. First, we ought not under any circumstances agree to a gas pipeline down from the Mackenzie delta unless there is an absolute assurance that Canadian gas will go to Canadian consumers and not be exported to the United States. Second, in his speech the Prime Minister said that the pipeline should be built if it did not "require the lowering of environmental standards or the neglect of Indian rights and interests".

Past government performance with respect to Indian rights and interests does not give one any reassurance that these words of the Prime Minister will become action. If the Mackenzie valley gas pipeline is necessary now to meet Canadian needs—and we said in our resolution in Vancouver last July that that is the time when the building of a pipeline should be considered—then there must be, not any wishy-washy guarantee but an absolute guarantee that Canadian gas from the Canadian north will be available to Canadian consumers on a priority basis that will not be broken either by the National Energy Board or by any other agency of this government.

An hon. Member: Or by the multinational corporations.

Mr. Lewis: Or by the multinational corporations. I did not mention them since any assurance given by them would not be worth the paper it was written on. The fact is that over the last number of months we have, as I have already said, had an influence upon this government to bring forward policies in the area of petroleum and petroleum products which now point us in the right direction. Whether they will in fact turn out to be entirely beneficial remains to be seen. But one thing I do know is that the multinational corporations, and governments and parties which support and defend them, have to be fought by the people of Canada. The people of Canada must take control of our future energy resources in this country without being enslaved by agreements, contracts, undertakings and promises which place the Canadian people in a straitjacket of supply, with dangerous results as to price.

This is the policy that we have put before the government in some positive detail, and this is the policy which, to some extent at least, the government has accepted. But like all Canadians, we in the New Democratic Party will watch the development of the policy announced last Thursday in action. The government has adopted policies which we have proposed and our vote tonight will be governed by that fact.

I want to say to the members of this House that we emphasize and recognize the importance of energy policy, not only for today but for future generations in this country. We will continue to develop as best we can positive policy suggestions, not only in the realm of petroleum but in the realm of other energy sources, in the hope that this parliament and the country may at last have