

*Canada Oil and Gas Act*

issue here be very carefully studied and handled by the government.

My colleague, the hon. member for Annapolis Valley-Hants (Mr. Nowlan), has discussed at some length the jurisdictional issue as it relates to the province of Nova Scotia. The premier of the province, Mr. Buchanan, has sent a letter to the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) indicating the long history of jurisdiction by the province of Nova Scotia over Sable Island. If hon. members recall, it was the inclusion of Sable Island which gave rise to the initial debate on this particular issue. Bill C-48 is attempting to include Sable Island and to change the jurisdictional boundaries of Nova Scotia in a very provocative manner by slipping in this two-word amendment without having the proper jurisdictional discussions with the province. The province of Nova Scotia is seeking to retain jurisdiction over the land which it has held for 350 years. Regardless of the outcome of the jurisdictional dispute on the offshore, Sable Island is a separate matter, and ownership of that particular property must be established on the same basis as it has been over the past 350 years.

In conclusion, let me say that in this motion we are seeing a difference in the view or concept of Canada as between the governing party, the Liberal Party, and the Progressive Conservative Party. We want to see balanced growth of this country. The government would prefer to see that this growth be centralized and controlled closely from Ottawa. We want to see that the provinces have the freedom to grow and to fulfil their own aspirations, because we see that the growth of one part of the country will be helpful to the whole country. It will be a tragedy if the Liberal Party rejects this philosophy and forces a tightly controlled development of the resources of the provinces, and particularly the Atlantic provinces which have not fared too well in confederation. If the Liberals are not able to come to terms with the development of areas which are distant from Ottawa, such as the Atlantic provinces, or, as is now so evident, the western provinces, it would be a real tragedy for this country.

The reason so many members of our caucus, over 20, have participated in this debate on this one particular motion is that we feel so strongly we should have balanced growth within this country, growth which is within the control of those people who are most affected. The Liberals, I am afraid, are concerned that if one part of the country grows too quickly, it will cause them problems. We see that if growth comes in various parts of the country, all the country will benefit by it. That is why we recognize that there is real strength in freeing those parts of the country, as they have the ability and the means through resource development, to build their own societies. They should have the freedom to grow and the freedom to expand within their own country.

**Hon. Judy Erola (Minister of State (Mines)):** Mr. Speaker, I, too, rise somewhat reluctantly to address Bill C-48 because it is the second time I do so. I must admit that I find the stalling tactics of the opposition on this very important legislation quite reprehensible.

Perhaps it is now a good time to review Bill C-48, its origins, how it came about, and what has happened to it in the process. The purpose of this bill is to regulate companies exploring and producing oil on the Canada lands; that is, in the northern territories, in the high Arctic and, of course, the offshore. That is agreed.

The inadequacy of the legislation which Bill C-48 will replace was first recognized over ten years ago. After much study and a careful analysis of all aspects of this country's energy industry, the federal government issued a policy statement which contained the essential elements of an energy strategy for Canadians. Bill C-20 was first introduced to incorporate this strategy. Bill C-20 was a predecessor of the present Bill C-48, but it died on the Order Paper.

It was a year ago approximately to the day that the National Energy Program was introduced in Parliament, in October, 1980, and Bill C-48 came into being. At that time the opposition vehemently criticized the government for delaying the implementation of such important and much needed legislation.

● (1620)

I am somewhat amused to hear the comments of the hon. member for Etobicoke Centre (Mr. Wilson). Last December 11 with reference to this bill he said:

The broad objectives of this legislation are worth while and certainly acceptable. One might go so far as to say that they are motherhood; they are intended to increase production and Canadian ownership, as well as to provide a very stable tax environment. I agree with the minister when he says that it is important to have this legislation. We have been waiting for it for about ten years now.

Yet we hear the same member saying today that he does not think there is any particular rush. He agrees with the minister on the need for legislation, but surely he must agree that if there was need for speed a year ago, there is an even greater need for speed now. The hon. member is pressing us to take action.

What has happened since then? In January, the bill was referred to the House of Commons Standing Committee on National Resources and Public Works. Committee members deliberated for some 135 hours. The hon. member for Etobicoke Centre is quite right when he pays tribute to all of those people who participated right through from January to June of this past year. There were 140 witnesses and related experts who appeared before the committee. Well over 100 amendments from all three parties were considered during these hearings which resulted in 3,200 pages of testimony and, as a result, a number of amendments have taken place.

In July 1981 the committee reported back to this House on the bill. Then, as is their right and as is becoming their practice, the opposition proceeded to reintroduce most of their amendments, amendments which were considered and disposed of in the committee during its previous deliberations. So in July the House once again began debate on Bill C-48, or rather on opposition motions to amend Bill C-48. Already 30 Members of Parliament have spoken on this amendment.