

Canada Petroleum Resources Act

for Vancouver Kingsway has stated. We have recently received copies of correspondence recently dated October 10 from the Tungavik Federation of Nunavut complaining about exactly what I have been saying, namely, the uncertainty that the Bill will cause in the land claims question and the losses that could be incurred by the native peoples.

I would ask that the amendments put forward by the Hon. Member for Vancouver Kingsway be supported, so that we can at least give the native people the assurance they are looking for concerning Clause 3, their land and the land claims question in the northern part of the country.

Mr. Dave Nickerson (Western Arctic): Mr. Speaker, the Hon. Member for Vancouver Kingsway (Mr. Waddell) has made something of a career both before he became a Member of Parliament and since that time telling the people of the Northwest Territories what is good for them. My career is dependent upon being told by them what is good for them. I do not represent a riding in the south where I could have all these airy-fairy ideas of what goes on in northern Canada. I am directly responsible to the people who elect me. Therefore, I have to present to this House their point of view which, of course, also coincides with that of my own.

The intent of the amendment we have before us would be to preclude all oil and gas activity in the entire Yukon territory, in nearly all of the Northwest Territories and probably in considerable parts of the offshore. When I go to towns and villages in my constituency I am told by people who live there that what they want to see is not less oil and gas activity but more. They want the opportunities that go with the oil and gas business. They want the business opportunities. They want the opportunities to work in the oil patch and make good money because you do make good money in the oil patch, Mr. Speaker. You make a lot more money working on a drill rig than what you do choking rabbits for a living, for instance. People want the opportunity to become involved in the oil and gas business, to become oil men and oil women in their own right. This is what they are telling me and this is what I am telling the House of Commons.

I am completely in opposition to the proposed amendment. I do not want to see the oil and gas industry die in the northern parts of Canada. To the contrary, I and my constituents want to see it thrive and prosper. That is why I am supporting the Bill presented by the Government of Canada.

Mr. John McDermid (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources): Mr. Speaker, I have listened with interest to the presentations of my friends, the Hon. Member for Vancouver Kingsway (Mr. Waddell) and the Hon. Member for Cape Breton—The Sydneys (Mr. MacLellan). We spent a considerable amount of time on this Bill, as you can imagine, Mr. Speaker, in committee in the spring. We had excellent representations from many groups on the Bill including our native peoples. I do not feel the way the Hon. Member does that the aboriginal peoples are not protected in this Bill.

First, I think it would be proper to explain that this Bill is framework legislation to deal with frontier exploration, exploration on what is known as Canadian Lands, whether they be north of 60, offshore British Columbia, Newfoundland or Nova Scotia—no matter what. Stemming from this legislation would be specific Acts covering the Atlantic Accord: our agreement with Newfoundland and the offshore exploration; the now agreed Nova Scotia Accord which will also have its own life and legislation introduced in this House sometime in the not too distant future, hopefully; very possibly a Northern Accord which would cover lands north of 60 and a British Columbia Accord possibly some day to deal with exploration off that coast as well.

This Bill was amended by the Government, I might add, to assure that our aboriginal peoples were protected. I will refer to Clause 3 which reads:

Nothing in this Act shall be construed so as to abrogate or derogate from any existing aboriginal or treaty rights of the aboriginal peoples of Canada—

It specifically says:

—under Section 35 of the Constitution Act, 1982.

The amendment introduced by my hon. friend gives this Bill a life of its own. I do not think it is intended to do that, being framework legislation. The aboriginal people get their title from The Constitution. That is their protection. The aboriginal peoples have said that.

Mr. Waddell: What is the matter with greater certainty then?

Mr. McDermid: The amendment as introduced by the Hon. Member does not really do that. We think the government amendment which was accepted by the committee and is now being introduced as part of the report stage with which we are now dealing is perfectly well drafted. It protects the rights of the aboriginal peoples of this country by specifically referring to our Constitution Act, 1982. I think that is very important.

● (1150)

I do not believe that the second amendment introduced by the Hon. Member for Vancouver-Kingsway does any favours for the aboriginal peoples. The Hon. Member for Cape Breton—The Sydneys talked about the dire straits of the economy of the north. If this second amendment is accepted it would stop all exploration in the north until the land claims are settled. I honestly do not believe that this is what our aboriginal peoples want.

The Hon. Member for Western Arctic (Mr. Nickerson) said it far more eloquently than I can because he represents people from that area and talks to them frequently. He is their Member of Parliament and he expressed it very well when he said that they want jobs and activity in the north. They do not want that activity in the north to stop for the land claims process.