

Oil and Petroleum

one big fellow, it is a waste of time for both small men to punch away at each other; they should punch the big man. So whenever I think I can be of assistance to the hon. member for Peace River I try, and offer what assistance I can.

I must confess that any intervention by me with regard to this particular amendment is certainly not helpful. We have been over the ground a number of times and I have expressed my point of view. However, I do take exception to the fact that the hon. member is suggesting that the reason we are not supporting the idea of the provincial right to set prices, and the reason we are not vehement about the fact that the federal government is seeking to set the price of petroleum products that enter inter-provincial and international trade, is that we are anxious to see big government, big controls and centralization. As a matter of fact that comes strangely from a political party which campaigned up and down, and over the length and breadth of Canada last year advocating wage and price controls. Except for 10 per cent of the labour force which comes under federal labour law, 90 per cent of the wages and a very large part of industry in this country comes under provincial jurisdiction.

● (2040)

At no time did I hear my Conservative friends telling the people of Canada how they proposed to fix either wages or prices. Constitutionally the only way they could have done so would have been to ask each province to pass enabling legislation delegating to some federal agency or tribunal the power to set prices and wages.

This party has not been inconsistent. One of the first things we did when the last parliament was elected in 1972 was to introduce a motion calling for a two-price system for petroleum products. If my memory is correct, on January 25, 1973, I, on behalf of this party, moved a motion on an opposition day calling for a two-price system in Canada, and in October, 1973, I moved a further motion on an opposition day calling for the kind of system we felt would protect Canadians against the exorbitant prices that were being charged by OPEC countries on the international market, and to cushion the Canadian people against these unprecedented and unjustified increases in the price of oil.

When the government moved belatedly, I think it was on December 13, 1973, we supported it. Our position has not altered in any way, shape or form. We believe that in Canada there has to be some control by the federal and provincial governments in concert, if possible, on a commodity like this which on world markets has quadrupled in price. If the federal and provincial governments cannot agree, someone must have the authority to prevent the Canadian price from going to the world price.

There is no reason why the Canadian people should pay \$12 or \$15 a barrel for their own oil which only two years ago was worth \$2.75 a barrel. The Canadian people have no right to be ripped off because of some constitutional argument that the federal government has not the power to establish the price. Very clearly it does have the power. It had the power in the matter of wheat.

[Mr. Douglas (Nanaimo-Cowichan-The Islands).]

When the price of some classes of wheat and rapeseed went up to \$8 a bushel on the Chicago market the government imposed a two-price system through the Wheat Board and kept the price down to the Canadian consumer, the livestock producers and feed purchasers in eastern Canada. This was done so they would not have to pay unjustified prices to western grain producers just because the world market had temporarily gone insane. When copper prices went out of line only a few short years ago the government stepped in and fixed a domestic price for copper as compared to the international price. There is nothing unusual about that.

I want to say in all kindness in respect of the amendment proposed that one of the reasons I did not get up and talk about it is that to me it is simply an expression of opinion that really does not relate to the clause at all and has no legal power whatsoever. I am not a lawyer, but I have rubbed shoulders enough with lawyers for a number of years so that I know even less about law now than before I began to rub shoulders with them, but I would invite anyone to explain to me how adding these words in the amendment to Clause 21(c) would have any legal effect whatsoever.

The hon. member for Calgary Centre said this was taken from the legislation having to do with the resource transfer legislation and the British North America Act. Of course it did, and it made sense in respect of that legislation. Under the British North America Act the original provinces that went into confederation in 1867, and those in 1871, had control of their resources. When Saskatchewan and Alberta became provinces in 1905 they were not given control of their resources. The hon. member was quite right when he said that was a very sore point with the people of the prairie provinces for a long time.

When the Bennett government brought in the legislation which gave the resources back to those provinces that did what this clause suggests. It restored to the position of equality with other provinces those provinces in respect of administration and control of one of their natural resources. Of course that was done.

As an aside, in addition to restoring that right to them the government was supposed to pay those provinces for having control of those resources all that prior time. I do not know how Alberta fared on that, but we never did get paid in Saskatchewan. The government under Mackenzie King agreed to cancel some old relief debts that it was never going to collect anyway to offset the \$55 million the government owed Saskatchewan for the resources that had been used up from 1905 to 1931.

The words used by the hon. member for Don Valley have some relevance in the meaning of the resource transfer legislation, but I suggest they have no meaning added here, and that is why I did not intervene in the debate. I really think they would add nothing, except perhaps an editorial comment which is hardly of value in a piece of legislation like this.

May I say one further thing before I sit down. I think all of us recognize that, if it were at all possible, the best way to agree upon the price which should be charged the Canadian consumers for petroleum products is to reach an agreement between the producing provinces and the Gov-