

primary importance, both nationally and internationally. It is a region for which the time has come in terms of its economic significance. We are trying to put in place a policy for our government which will respond to those changes, one which will respond to the new economic significance of the west. The western development fund is only one part of that, simply to make revenues available to provide for additional initiatives and projects. We believe that reorienting the outlook of the entire federal structure, is necessary. Similarly the outlook of the provincial governments and the outlook of the private sector must be reoriented. How do we ensure the tremendous potential which is looming in western Canada in the areas of employment, new investment and new resources? We are thinking of means by which they can be properly capitalized and used for the benefit not only of westerners but of all Canadians. It is our objective to say, in the light of this new resource boom that this is the time and here is the chance to do what westerners have always wanted to do, which is to diversify and mature their economy, not to have it based solely upon resources but to bring industry and technology into the west. Our thought is to provide for a whole new industrial base which will not work solely for the interests of the west, though that will certainly be of prime importance, but will be of benefit to the entire country, multiplying its benefits from one end of Canada to the other. That is what we are after.

Mr. Speaker, I think this should be the objective shared by all members of this House. Rather than taking cheap shots and making premature judgments, trying to stomp something into the ground, they should be trying to help us. They should be making recommendations and proposals we could use. We are a government. We have to make decisions. In doing so we are also prepared to listen to members of the opposition who come forward with constructive and positive proposals of how we can take advantage of a new resource boom in western Canada and use it to develop a richer, broader, more varied economy in that region. It does mean investing in new transportation facilities. It does mean putting new rail lines in to carry potash, coal and grain to markets. It does mean investing in new industrial locations. It means ensuring that the productivity of the soil is maintained and enhanced. There are a number of options and opportunities open to us in the west. All we are saying, as the federal government, is that we would like to use some of the revenues which come out of our resources to recycle something back into that economic plan for the benefit of western Canadians. I find it hard to accept that such a plan should be the subject of the kind of criticism which journalists, editorialists, provincial premiers or members like the one from Calgary South express, which is so negative, blind and narrow that they would not give us a chance to put that kind of a program in place. We think a national government should have some role in that economic plan of development, not just a provincial premier or one provincial government. That is the difference between us. We feel that by putting that kind of economic plan into operation we can share the benefits among all.

The debate we are engaged in today is a good one and it is useful but I think it is time we gathered away from the wailing

wall, stopped the gnashing of teeth and the tearing of hair, stopped the negativism we see here and started looking at what a national energy policy can do for western Canada. We should be looking at what western Canada can do for the rest of the country. If we can bring ourselves to that kind of action, then I think we will have a much more positive debate.

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Lorne McCuish (Prince George-Bulkley Valley):** Mr. Speaker, before I address myself to the motion before the House I would like to say most sincerely that it is, indeed, an honour for me to rise and contribute to this debate. It is fair to say that I am somewhat at a disadvantage here, Mr. Speaker, because you are so calm and relaxed and I am so much afraid. One emotion which I do have stronger than the fear I demonstrate is that of pride. I take pride in the fact that I am here, that I am a backbencher. In that one way, as a backbencher, there is only one way for me to go—down. I take pride in the fact that I am a Progressive Conservative and that I can call these men my colleagues—seven at last count. More important, I take pride in the fact that I have been chosen by the people of Prince George-Bulkley Valley to represent them in this, the House of Commons, and to speak on their behalf.

Although I take pleasure in contributing to this debate, I feel somewhat saddened by the fact that there is the need for it. I am saddened because we are in the midst of a debate on an issue which allows the federal government, under the Petroleum Administration Act, to unilaterally set the price of oil and natural gas.

Due to the federal government's inability to secure a lasting agreement with Alberta on a pricing scheme, they now propose to act alone without regard to, or respect for, their partners in confederation—the provinces. They have acted on clauses 36 and 52 of the act. This, to me, is tantamount to the other guillotine measures they have adopted during this brief session of the Thirty-second Parliament. A feeling of despair increases because the federal government is once again, demonstrating its disregard for western Canada, that part of our confederation which undoubtedly holds the key for future economic stability and security through its natural resources.

● (2110)

Now we find ourselves debating a section which allows the Government of Canada the right to overrule the provinces. This is a debate which should never have taken place.

I should like to emphasize the point made by the hon. member for Etobicoke Centre (Mr. Wilson). He stated that in December, 1979, our government was able to reach an agreement with the government of Alberta after tough, protracted and difficult negotiations. But we were able to reach an agreement. Our agreement was but a signature away from being final. Therefore, I find it hard to believe the present government would fail to come to an agreement with the government of Alberta, particularly as the Liberal government had promised the Canadian people a made-in-Canada energy package.