

*Petro-Canada*

I think the hon. member for Capilano (Mr. Huntington) very accurately defined the operations of Air Canada vis-à-vis the private sector, notwithstanding the fact that CP Air is confined to limited access in respect of domestic routes in this country. When we look at the performance and efficiency of any Crown corporation we find that it does not stack up with its private enterprise counterpart, except in losing money as my colleague from Central Nova pointed out.

I have listened to a number of speeches in this debate, and have read others. It has seemed to me that many members opposite presume that this Crown corporation will in fact solve the bulk of the fossil fuel problems we have in this country and give the federal government a firmer hand in dealing with the producing provinces and the multinational corporations.

We hear in effect from members opposite that the corporation will provide the major impact in respect of self-sufficiency and advanced technology. One member, I believe the hon. member for Peel-Dufferin-Simcoe (Mr. Milne), indicated that this corporation will be the major supplier and holder of a great new amount of technology under its licence. We note as well that they contend this corporation will become a major instrument for providing cheap energy.

They go further to say that the measure is necessary for the government to move in with a petroleum corporation in order to check rising prices. In my view this argument is fallacious as well as simplistic, for we have only to look at any Crown corporation to see that it does not provide services more effectively or efficiently than a private corporation. In most cases, because the Crown corporation is the recipient of generous public subsidies it is even more inefficient and ineffective. The best that can be said for these arguments is that they are nothing but rhetoric.

I am disheartened by the superficial analysis some members have made in respect of their approach to energy problems. It seems there is a greater desire to protect a political doctrine than to deal with energy problems. If we are honest with ourselves in dealing with prices we know that our prices should not and cannot vary too much from the world price. That is one of the reasons why we are having a national energy conference starting in Ottawa this week. So far as self-sufficiency is concerned, it is closely related to our exploration ability and activity which at present are at a very low ebb. Unless the political and economic climate changes, we will experience a continuation of this dearth of exploration activity. We are told that no less than 50 drilling rigs left Canada this past year because of the political climate and because of the confusion of the federal government. The count continues to decrease in 1975, and 75 per cent of the rigs have left for more profitable off-shore markets, leaving us in short supply.

● (2120)

Security of supply is indeed the most important element in our efforts to meet our energy needs and requirements. In my view, if this bill ensured in some way a security to supply, perhaps it would merit some support. However, I contend that this bill will not do that, and I think that we have to address ourselves to the problem of exploration.

[Mr. Mazankowski.]

The choice is ours, either to explore or not to explore, and I do not believe that this bill will provide any initiative, incentive or new direction in exploration and development.

Surely one of the major elements in our effort to resolve the energy problem is for the federal government to take a more positive role in defining an effective, realistic and comprehensive national energy policy. We must have a climate which is conducive to exploration and development, and that is something that we have not had in the past 12 to 18 months.

As I said in my opening remarks, a number of excellent speeches on this bill have been made such as, for instance, by the hon. member for Don Valley (Mr. Gillies), the hon. member for Regina East (Mr. Balfour), and the hon. member for Qu'Appelle-Moose Mountain (Mr. Hamilton). I should like to refer to the comments made by the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources (Mr. Foster). I found some of his comments to be rather amusing because it seemed to me they might more appropriately have come from a member of the NDP rather than a member of the Liberal party. He suggested that private enterprise could no longer meet the demands imposed upon it. I do not know what interpretation to place on that comment, but if he is suggesting that we are now living in such a complicated technical era that only government enterprise can meet the challenges of the day, then I say to you, Madam Speaker, that there is very little hope for this country.

I believe that the hon. member is wrong in his assessment. I believe that his assessment is nonsensical and illogical, because if we look at the past and into the future we will realize that the major breakthroughs in our scientific and technological achievements have not come from government enterprise but indeed from the resourcefulness, initiative and dynamism of the private sector. All this can be achieved, provided the climate is conducive and that there is no undue government interference, in other words, that the shackles of government do not unduly inhibit the process.

I submit that, given the right climate, private enterprise can continue to provide major breakthroughs in our scientific and technological achievements. Governments have tended to restrict and interfere too much—particularly this government—rather than to promote the initiative to which I referred.

The parliamentary secretary indicated also that there was lack of substance in the contributions to this debate by opposition members. The parliamentary secretary has not been listening carefully, and I suggest to him that he read some of the speeches that have been made because some very constructive suggestions have been made and important warnings have been advanced, for instance by the hon. member for Rocky Mountain (Mr. Clark).

As has been pointed out by other speakers, the bill before us gives to Petro-Can broad terms of reference. First, it gives Petro-Can the authority to explore, develop and exploit oil and gas deposits within and without Canada. In my view this ignores several facts.

The Canadian government, as we all know, is already involved in exploration and development under the aegis