

which should be before it. This might be understandable, although not excusable, except for the fact that energy and energy needs have been at the forefront of debate in every country of the world during the past few years.

Because of the fact we do have energy resources in our nation, this government has been lulled into the feeling that we did not have to put in place a particular policy to meet the needs of Canadians. If there has been an energy policy of any sort by the government, it has to be described as some sort of vague sort of continentalism, a policy that was not based on the fundamental responsibility of any government, which is to protect the sovereignty of its own country, to protect the needs of its people, and to guard the rights of all its citizens.

In the development of energy, this government has been so caught up in the wrong issues; it has missed the fundamentals; it has been so concerned about extending government control into the private sector that it has failed to meet the basic energy needs of the Canadian people.

The reality of the Canadian situation is that we have no energy policy. We have not had an energy policy since the fifties. In those days we had a policy. It was a very simple policy. It was the right policy, and it was based on three very simple propositions.

One was to increase the supply of energy in Canada. This was done by the development of a selective price policy favorable to the western oil producers. Second, it stated that the slow growth areas of the nation should not have to pay as high a price for energy as more prosperous regions, and this was achieved by having Atlantic Canada use offshore oil for its needs. Finally, any excess production was to be exported so that we could help solve our balance of payments problems.

This was the policy developed in the Diefenbaker years, which people liked to deride. However, it was a policy that worked, and it was a policy that was important for all Canadians. There was neither conflict with provinces nor with industry, and there was protection for all Canadians regardless of where they lived.

Canadians could survive the neglect of not having an energy policy throughout the last decade as long as there was cheap energy throughout the world. However, that situation changed in 1973 with the development of the OPEC cartel. When the day of inexpensive energy was over, every Canadian had the right to expect that this government would develop a new viable energy policy, a policy that would increase the supply of energy in this country, particularly oil and natural gas, and a policy that would assure that every Canadian, because we are a country rich in energy, would have the energy he needed.

Instead we have today a situation where there is a portion of Canadians who have no access to energy that is produced in this country. We in this party do not believe that there are second-class citizens in any part of Canada. We do not believe in an energy policy that does not include all Canadians. We believe that a government that apparently has no concern about all of Atlantic Canada in its so-called energy strategy is

Energy Supplies

a government which does not deserve the confidence of the people of Canada.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Gillies: That is the situation we find ourselves in today. This government talked constantly about the need for conservation, and yet we have moved from a country that was exporting oil to a country that is importing oil. We have a government that has ostensibly talked about increasing supply after the OPEC crisis, but look what it did.

First, we had the enormous conflict brought about by this government over the taxation of energy. At the very time that we needed a policy to increase supplies, the federal government went out of its way to reduce supplies. Second, we have a federal government that in nine years could not put in a place a set of regulations for the regulation of exploration of oil and gas in the northern parts of Canada. In the same period of time, the British discovered oil in the North Sea, drilled for it and brought it to market. As the hon. member for Nanaimo-Cowichan-The Islands (Mr. Douglas) said, Great Britain is now in an export position.

We in this country have the greatest proven oil reserves in the world in the tar sands of Alberta. What did the government do? Nothing. For 13 years there was a private enterprise corporation working in the oil sands developing technology to obtain oil from the sands. What did the government of Canada do? Nothing.

When the crisis came upon us and Syncrude started, the federal government instead of supporting the pioneer work allowed world prices to Syncrude without allowing them to the Great Canadian Tar Sands company which had pioneered the work there. A country that was talking about doing something to increase our energy supplies did nothing.

The only thing, of consequence, the government could think of doing was to create PetroCan, the post office of the petroleum industry. It was to be the answer to all our supply problems. What has it done? It has not discovered any oil and in the current crisis it has nothing to offer Canadians.

It was intriguing to hear the minister say how exciting it is that PetroCan is dealing over in China, when the people in Atlantic Canada cannot get energy. That is the problem. That is why we need a government policy to deal with energy problems in Atlantic Canada.

The policy of the Liberal government has been put forth in their statement, a strategy for self-reliance. What a mistake in direction for this country. The energy policy for Canada must be a policy of self-sufficiency. With the resources we have in this country, it is irresponsible in the extreme for any government to suggest that Canada must be dependent on other nations to meet its energy needs. We do not have to be and with the proper policies which will be developed after the next election with a new government, we will not be.

The case can be made that the general policies followed by the federal government in the energy field, particularly with respect to oil, since the OPEC crisis, have probably reduced