

Energy

We are not suggesting lengthy debates. We are suggesting that action taken by order in council, by regulation, should be susceptible of being brought back to the House on the resolution of a limited number of members for discussion. The government, after all, has the weight in numbers and, if it has a case, its view will always prevail. But at least we and the people will know that questions of considerable consequence can be brought back here and discussed. The government has walked half a mile and declined to go the whole distance. It was the same with the northern pipeline bill. I was happy to see in that legislation provision for a permanent reference of the same nature as I have in mind. That is one of the reasons the bill was so quickly passed, in my view. I should like to ask the minister to give us, when he replies, some real reasons for not including a provision by which ten, 20 or 30 members of the House could proceed by way of an affirmative or negative resolution which would bring back to this Chamber for limited debate significant actions taken by order in council, regulation or decree. After all, a great deal of money might easily be involved.

Hon. members may recall that the Committee on Statutory Instruments has suggested that negative and affirmative resolutions should play a far larger part in the proceedings of the House. I put it to ministers who are here, and to ministers who are not here but who may yet find the time to read what is being said in the House of Commons today, that legislation would be much more acceptable to the House if it contained safeguards and precautions of the kind I have mentioned. This parliament is dying. It should have been dead a long time ago. The stench is beyond bearing at the present time.

Mr. MacFarlane: The prevailing wind comes from over on that side.

Mr. Baldwin: Let us hope that the new parliament will be more lively, that a great deal more independence and objectivity will be shown by its members. I think the public takes a very dim view of this parliament, and it is much to be hoped that the parliament which replaces it will act in a more reasonable and independent way and insist upon making the government more accountable. That, after all, is the duty of parliament. We do not govern. We do not want to govern.

An hon. Member: Let's hear about the bill!

Mr. Baldwin: I am talking about the bill. Some of the hon. members over on that side should take these words to heart. Making government accountable is what parliament is all about. If it fails in this task, I think parliament will have a very short life because the public has had just about enough. If they see, contained in legislation, measures of the kind I have described, the people will know they have some protection. They have no such knowledge today. Although it falls far short of what is desirable, I will go along with the bill. There has been an opportunity to rectify some of the omissions. Besides, I have the very firm knowledge that there will be a better government and a better man to look after the bill when the election is over.

Mr. Arnold Peters (Timiskaming): Mr. Speaker, we are continually providing assistance to Syncrude to produce synthetic oil. There is probably no objection to doing so because some people in this country believe there is an oil shortage. However, a lot of people do not think there is an oil shortage at all.

A year or so ago there was supposed to be a shortage of gas as well. While travelling on the highway yesterday I was surprised to hear an advertisement by companies asking people in Ontario to instal gas furnaces. Incidentally, I heard that 70 per cent of the new houses in Ontario are being so equipped. If you put gas from a private monopoly gas company in your home, the companies assure you that fuel bills will be 10 per cent less than if any other kind of heating system had been installed. The company also guarantees a three-year supply. A number of other concessions are available. First, no payment on the furnace is required for the first year. Thereafter, payments are spread over a ten-year period, I think it is, and the interest rate is lower than the normal rate. They also said they would instal a burner in an existing furnace free of charge. Thereafter there would be a small monthly rental fee. In addition, they would put the gas line into the House from the street free of charge. All the customer had to do was agree to take gas for a one-year period.

If there is, indeed, a gas shortage, all this sounds very strange to me. I draw attention to it because I do not believe the gas companies. I do not believe the oil companies. I do not believe we know what the situation is. The price of gasoline has gone up considerably and we do not know what the government is doing to ensure we are getting a fair deal.

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A few years ago premium gasoline with lead was introduced for high compression engines. It cost five cents more for gasoline with lead. Now we have new cars which use catalytic converters and which require unleaded gasoline. It now costs five cents more for unleaded gasoline than it does for gasoline with lead in it. At one time the oil companies charged for putting lead in gasoline, and then they charged to take it out. That is not honest or fair. The oil companies are cheating and stealing from us. We are charged extra for gasoline with lead and then charged extra for gasoline without lead. These changes have cost us ten cents a gallon, because it costs five cents to put it in and five cents to take it out.

I am not at all sure that the minister knows the potential of the oil companies of this country. The minister never talks about the oil which was pumped ten years ago at 15 cents a barrel. At that time the oil companies were having trouble getting rid of it. No new machinery has been put into the oil wells, and I doubt if it costs 30 cents a barrel to pump oil out of wells now.

When we talk about setting the price of oil for the Canadian public, we talk about the highest possible price, the world price. The minister is getting information that there will be a shortage, but the general public doubts that. The public does not believe that the information being given is correct, because