

*Energy*

we know what happened after that. The government was defeated and the people of Canada saw, after looking at such a performance, that they had no choice but to return the Liberal government to power, a government which knew how to take its responsibilities and carry through all its undertakings. It is obvious, Mr. Speaker, that in one area our government has always been and will continue to be in the years to come a responsible government which will take its responsibilities in this area.

This brings me, Mr. Speaker, to a particular point of the whole energy policy, namely the extremely important area of natural gas. Our government took extremely important decisions in this area. One only has to recall the agreement this government gave on the construction and the extension of the pipeline to Quebec City; it also urged the extension of the pipeline to the maritime provinces.

This also brings me to talk about another fact that was noted by the hon. member for Annapolis Valley-Hants. He complained this afternoon that the government had not acted on this extremely important matter of extending the pipeline to the maritimes. Yet he should know that his colleagues in the House of Commons regularly ask questions about this and that the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources has always answered adequately, and that there is now an appeal before the National Energy Board. We hope that a decision will be made in the near future and that it will favour an extension of the pipeline to the maritime provinces. Mr. Speaker, this would mean that our government is truly taking its responsibilities seriously and give great importance to the natural gas sector of energy, to show how our country will be able in the future to stop depending on oil producing countries for its energy needs.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to underline briefly the importance that this pipeline, especially the part from Montreal to Quebec City, and then the extension to the maritimes, will have for my region, eastern Quebec, and especially the Gaspé Peninsula. As our region is rather remote from major centres, it must accept enormous deficits for residential heating, and oil is very expensive to transport. We have to accept some slight increases compared with major centres.

The extension of such a pipeline will obviously eliminate all these cost increases. This is precisely why this Liberal government is taking its responsibilities by wanting to extend part of the energy distribution system in Quebec, especially east of Montreal and in eastern Canada, because these are the regions where unemployment is the highest, and which suffer most from their remoteness, and this is why our government has undertaken to see to it that the population of these areas can have access to the enormous supplies of Canadian natural gas.

I find it difficult to understand another criticism that I heard this afternoon concerning the possible running out of conventional oil within six years in Alberta. Mr. Speaker, it is a fact that, according to our figures, if we compare proven

reserves to consumption this year, these reserves will last from six to eight years.

I think this is forgetting most important energy factors, namely the Canadian energy situation—they forgot that each year we have significant oil discoveries—and neglected all the efforts made by our government in energy conservation. There has been much talk about government advertising in that area. Mr. Speaker, I feel that the advertisements put out by the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources and the Canadian government each week, each day in the newspapers and each week in weeklies is most important. The aim is simply to make the people understand and realize the need to conserve energy.

Another action by our government is the 10 per cent reduction in the use of oil for home and commercial building heating in Canada, to be replaced by natural gas. These are actions by our government, and in order to explain briefly that such a six to eight-year figure for oil reserves is wrong, our actions in that area must be considered.

This leads me to refer to our natural gas reserves. We know they are important to our energy potential, but we also know that in the late fifties and the early sixties demand for natural gas was not very high. However, a much steeper price increase for oil than gas resulted in significantly higher volumes of natural gas consumption, which experienced a threefold increase between 1962 and 1972. The consumption increase was nearly 12 per cent per year, and the over-all natural gas consumption doubled. Up to 1970, new discoveries more than offset annual production rates, that went from some 35 billion cubic feet in 1962 to nearly 57 billion in 1970. However, at the end of 1974, proven reserves remaining in Alberta and the area were estimated at some 57 billion cubic feet.

However, to continue to maintain the price of natural gas as it was would have greatly hindered discoveries in that sector. This is why our government has stated on several occasions that it would like to increase the price of natural gas. Such a policy has promoted prospecting for natural gas so that in 1979 our known reserves amounted to 80.4 billion cubic feet, good for 52 years. Our reserves also figured out in 1979 were 260 billion cubic feet, enough for 179 years. It therefore means, Mr. Speaker, that the federal government has assumed its responsibilities in the field of natural gas, so that our dependency especially on oil is likely to be reduced. The great efforts that we will be making in the years to come in that area, as the minister said this afternoon, will enable us to reach that self-sufficiency which we seek and all want.

Mr. Speaker, I would like finally to point out another very important fact in the field of natural gas, that is its anti-pollution effect in the sectors where it is used. It is evident that hardly any pollution can be traced to natural gas.

When it comes to regions such as Gaspé and eastern Canada where fishing is a very important and almost vital activity for the people, the use of natural gas will have a definite impact