

ordinated manner. This lack of knowledge and leadership on the oil issue is currently evident in the minister's futile efforts to determine whether Canada is being affected by Saudi Arabian oil embargoes. The minister maintains that we are not on Saudi Arabia's black list.

The fact is, however, that we are on their embargo list. We have been told as much by Sheik Zaki Yamani, the Saudi Arabian oil minister. On CTV's "W-5", Mr. Yamani stated that Canada has been cut off totally from Saudi Arabian oil supplies. Why then has the minister not been informed of this? While it is true that Canadians are generally confused about the energy situation, it appears that the minister may be more confused than anyone. And yet, he is asking parliament to give him these tremendous powers. How can Parliament be sure the minister will know what to do with them? I am sceptical.

The economic effects of this bill must also be examined carefully. Inasmuch as the industrial, commercial and business sectors of the economy depend upon energy products to produce output, mandatory allocation and rationing of energy and energy products suggests that domestic economic activity could be regulated under the provisions of Bill C-236. It should be remembered that control over energy resources implies economic control.

● (2050)

For example, clause 16(2) of the bill allows allocation to be applied selectively, if necessary, to specific areas as well as to individual consumers of energy or energy products. This could be seen as a means to achieve regional economic policy ends. If the government wanted to see the establishment of a plastics industry in say, Toronto, then it would be a simple matter to declare that a shortage of certain petroleum by-products necessary for the production of plastics exists throughout Canada, except in Ontario. Whether the shortage is actual or is declared by fiat is a matter of the opinion of the Governor in Council.

There are numerous other ways in which this bill might affect economic activity. All of them imply government control, and government control means socialism. An estimate of the industries directly affected by allocation measures contained in this bill shows that almost 20 per cent of real domestic product could conceivably be controlled by the Governor in Council. This is a potentially dangerous arrangement especially for our free enterprise system. Indirectly this control also applies to retail outlets which sell goods which are composed of an energy product.

What all of this means is economic domination by the government. This is a road toward which the government is already heading Canada. Surely, Mr. Speaker, we will get there soon enough, so the government does not have to speed up the process. This bill, and the government's proposed national energy corporation simply mean the expenditure of more money, more government, more bureaucracy, more skyscrapers in Hull and, concomitantly, less individual freedom. This I vigorously oppose.

Not only is this bill unnecessary for the reasons I have just mentioned but it is unnecessary because a statute already exists which would give the government many of the powers it is now seeking. The special provisions of the Export and Imports Permit Act provide the government

Energy Supplies Emergency Act

with most of the authority it needs to come to grips with the current situation. For example, section 3 of the act provides in part:

The Governor in Council may establish a list of goods to be called an export control list, including therein any article the export of which he deems it necessary to control.

However, this is not to imply that I favour exercising such powers under that act, or under any other act or bill. I believe that the government's reasons for not employing the provisions contained in Bill C-236 via the Export and Imports Permit Act are politically motivated. The Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources wants to give the impression that he is doing something about the situation, and that this bill is an innovative policy to deal with our energy shortages. Such is not the case. This bill merely excuses the government's inaction on the supposed crisis by implying that the government did not have the powers necessary to deal with such an event. But this fact should not come as a surprise. After all, this is the essence of the Liberal government.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, the bill is unacceptable to me. It is an unnecessary and potentially harmful piece of legislation concocted for politically expedient reasons by a government whose inability to handle the entire energy situation can only be equalled by its inability to handle the economic situation. Unfortunately, in both instances it is the Canadian people who will suffer.

Mr. Walter Baker (Grenville-Carleton): Mr. Speaker, when the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources (Mr. Macdonald) opened this debate a few days ago, the thing I remembered most about his speech was not so much what he said, as the almost matter of fact way in which he outlined what I am sure he, on another day, will call a case for granting unto this particular government extraordinary powers. I say that what he said was not too important from that point of view because if he had been making a submission to a judge to try to convince him of the points of view set forth in his argument that these powers were necessary, then I think it is fair to say that his cause failed, and his cause should have failed. But it was the unconcern that I noted with which he dealt with these extraordinary powers, these massive rights, really a theft from the legislative process that he was asking this House to agree to give him without, it seemed, any recourse whatsoever that worried me.

I want to say at the outset that it has never been the policy of this party to deprive the government, even this government which has proven itself so inept and inert, of the powers it might need to cope with a real national emergency, whether that emergency was in the field of energy or anything else over which it had jurisdiction. The one criterion we have asked for, however, is proof that the emergency is in fact a real emergency.

Having said that I want to say I do not feel I would be happy being a member of this party if it abrogated its responsibilities, whether in opposition as it is now, or in government as it soon will be—

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Baker: —by granting all these overriding powers in circumstances under which this granting or this taking of