

Energy Supplies Emergency Act

part of an oil policy. It is something which is waiting in the wings to be called to centre stage should certain eventualities arise. We are supporting it because we believe the people are entitled to protection in the event that an oil shortage arises.

I am surprised at the attitude taken by members of the Conservative Party who for weeks were shouting to high heaven about the danger of an oil shortage, and who now seem to protest at every stage because emergency legislation is being provided under which the government can deal with such a shortage should it occur. To my mind, it is inconsistent to complain constantly that the people of Atlantic Canada and Quebec will be in a very precarious position if imported oil were not available to them, while at the same time opposing legislation which would enable the present government or any other government to ensure that whatever oil supplies are available would be fairly distributed to all regions.

As a matter of fact, this legislation if it is put into effect will enable the government to do something which has never been done before, namely, to bring the multinational oil companies which operate in Canada under some type of control. Since the beginning of oil development in Canada there has never been any such control. The foreign-owned oil companies which operate in this country have determined the supply of oil, have manipulated the price of oil and have been able to milk the Canadian consumer at will. I have a strong suspicion that much of the opposition we have heard to this legislation arises because it will bring the oil companies under some type of government supervision and control in the event of an emergency.

I should like to point out that all the power which is contained in this legislation is power which is not given to the board but to the cabinet, and that every action taken by the board, every regulation it passes, every order it issues has to be approved by the governor in council. We are therefore justified in saying to the minister that he is the one who will be responsible to the House and the country for the manner in which the board exercises the tremendous powers which parliament has given to the cabinet. I hope the minister will see to it that these powers are exercised in an equitable manner.

I wish to reiterate what I said on second reading: there must be some protection for the independents and there must be some protection for the co-operative oil companies and refineries. The independents, and to a lesser extent the co-operatives, have had to depend on the largesse of the big oil companies. When oil was in plentiful supply the oil companies had no objection to letting the independents and co-operatives have some of their excess oil as spot oil. But when oil is scarce, then the oil companies will see to it that if anyone has to do without oil it is not the outlets controlled by the oil companies but the outlets that are independent or co-operatively controlled. I urge the minister to recognize that we look upon him as the person responsible for protecting the rights of the co-operatives and independents and to see to it that they get fair and equitable treatment.

● (1550)

This board will have on it a representative from the producing province of Alberta, a representative from

Quebec, a representative from the oil companies and someone representing consumer groups. There will be no representative from the independents or co-operatives. I realize you cannot put everyone on the board, and I have a strong suspicion that the representative from Alberta and the representative from the oil companies will look at things in very much the same way. Consequently, it is quite possible that the co-operatives and the independent operators will be completely ignored, and unless the minister exercises his prerogative in cabinet the co-operatives and independents could be discriminated against, neglected and overlooked. I hope the minister will keep that in mind.

This legislation will, of course, be of great value if an emergency does arise. But as my colleagues and I have been seeking to stress this afternoon, this bill does not constitute an oil policy. We still have not had any clear statement from the government on a number of matters that we have been asking the government to clarify for some weeks. We still have had no statement either from the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources (Mr. Macdonald) or from the Minister of Finance (Mr. Turner) as to what the government's intentions are with respect to price.

The Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources has been quoted in the press as saying that the price will probably double by midsummer and go up to \$8 or \$10 a barrel. The Minister of Finance says that the domestic price will be allowed to track the world price. We have had no clarification from the government as to what they intend to do about price, whether it will rise, by how much it will be allowed to rise, who is going to get the benefit of the rise, whether it will go into the pockets of the oil companies or into the treasuries of the federal and provincial governments concerned. The government ought to be giving this House that kind of information.

The government has talked a good deal about the plight of the people in the Atlantic provinces and in Quebec who at the present time are paying exorbitant prices because they are dependent upon imported oil from the OPEC countries. But we have had no statement from the government as to whether they intend to set up some type of marketing mechanism that will pool the oil and equalize the price across Canada, or whether there will be any subsidization of price for the people of the Atlantic provinces who are being hardest hit and who are least able to bear the burden of rising prices. I hope we will get some statement on those questions from the minister, if not today certainly as soon as the House reassembles.

I hope the minister will be making some statement before the House recesses regarding the route that is being selected for the construction of a pipeline to Montreal. My colleague from Sault Ste. Marie has already dealt with this matter, so there is no need for me to speak extensively about it except to say that this is a matter that demands immediate action. It is now over four months since the government gave its blessing to the idea of extending the pipeline. If the delay is entirely due to the fact that the government cannot make up its mind, then that is understandable. What is new about that? It has great difficulty making up its mind about most things.

If the difficulty lies in the fact that the Interprovincial Pipe Line Company is not prepared to co-operate and to