

Oral Questions

Mr. Lalonde: Madam Speaker, I regret that the right hon. Leader of the Opposition counts so badly. This government has not been in office for six months: it took at least two months to bring down the terrible government we had last year.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Lalonde: As far as the point raised by the right hon. Leader of the Opposition is concerned, I want to assure him that the offer I will put forward will be comprehensive.

Mr. Clark: Perhaps I was giving the minister too much credit for foresight. I assume that when he voted down an energy policy which would have given Canada security of supply and an effective pricing increase, he had an alternative in mind six months ago.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Miss MacDonald: Obviously, he did not.

Mr. Clark: What troubles me is that there is no evidence he has an alternative in mind today, 13 days before the expiry of the agreement now in place. I should like to ask him a couple of specific questions about the comprehensive agreement he intends to discuss tomorrow with the government of Alberta.

Can the minister tell the House of Commons whether there will be a provision for some kind of special help to lower income Canadians who will be affected by the price increases that will come: special help either in the form of the kind of tax credit proposed by my government or by some other means?

Can he tell us whether the federal proposal he intends to put before the province of Alberta tomorrow involves using some of the tax moneys from the petroleum industry in Canada to establish an institution similar to the Canadian Energy Bank that will allow and encourage Canadian individuals to invest in the development of the Canadian energy? Will those details be part of the precise package which he will put before the government of Alberta tomorrow?

Mr. Lalonde: Madam Speaker, the hon. Leader of the Opposition seems to be very exercised about the fact that we have been negotiating for four months. I need only remind him that it took him six months not to reach an agreement with the government of Alberta.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

● (1420)

Mr. Lalonde: We are going to meet again tomorrow, and meet as long as necessary. There have been indications by myself and by the minister of energy for Alberta that July 1 was a target date, not a deadline, and that we were trying to reach an agreement by July 1. I am sure the hon. Leader of the Opposition has read the press reports both from me and from Mr. Leitch to the effect that if some progress shows up, we would continue our discussions even after July 1.

As to the specific contents of these exchanges, I indicated before that I did not intend to reveal the content of the specific proposals that might be made by the government of Alberta: I do not think I should do so unless and until we have met, discussed them and agreed to make them public. I think for the purpose of frank and honest discussion I should at least pay the courtesy to my colleague of having meetings with him first before revealing any of these contents.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Clark: Madam Speaker, the minister is prepared to reveal details on national television, but not in this House of Commons. Can he tell us, in respect of the proposal he is going to put to the Alberta government tomorrow, first of all whether it will be a firm proposal; and, secondly, whether that proposal will include elements other than simply price?

Mr. Lalonde: Madam Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition claims that I have not been willing to give information to the House of Commons. Last week I sat every day in the House expecting a question asking me what offer I would make to the government of Alberta, but I am afraid the opposition was not on its toes. I do not know whether the opposition was asleep, but they did not rise at the time.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

An hon. Member: Tell us now.

Mr. Lalonde: It took somebody from the press to ask me the question whether an offer had been made and what the answer might be. As far as the question raised by the hon. member is concerned, I have already said that the offer I would make would be comprehensive.

DATE OF COMMENCEMENT OF ALSANDS AND COLD LAKE PROJECTS

Hon. Bill Jarvis (Perth): Madam Speaker, I have a supplementary for the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources. The June 30 deadline is well known. Perhaps less well known is another deadline—but of vital importance—and that is the August 1 deadline by which government concurrence is required in order to permit both the Alsands and the Cold Lake projects to commence this year—projects of \$6 billion each. Is it the government's position and policy that either, or both, of those projects commence in 1980?

Hon. Marc Lalonde (Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources): Madam Speaker, I would hope that our discussions with the government of Alberta will have reached a definite conclusion by the end of July, at the latest.

Mr. Jarvis: Then I do not understand, Madam Speaker, why the minister is, or has been talking in terms of an October agreement and simply an interim agreement. He will be aware that his colleague, the Minister of State for Economic Development, in the other place, indicated that Alsands alone in the construction and engineering phases, together with the