

*Northern Pipeline*

itself. I say that advisedly. Nothing could symbolize more the neglect with which the government has treated hon. members in this House on this matter than the fact that even a day or two after the Deputy Prime Minister (Mr. MacEachen) held his press conference and made his announcement describing the terms of the bill my office made inquiry as to whether the kit or material were available, and we were told that members of parliament would get it in due course. The initial distribution was to senior public servants. I am told by some hon. members this afternoon that they still had not received the material.

I have to say to the government, Mr. Speaker, that this is really not good enough and there is no excuse for it. This government comes to members of the opposition, whether in this party or in other opposition parties, and constantly asks us to help get legislation through. Members tell us they need help to keep things in the House moving. It would not take very much to remember some of the fundamental courtesies. When telephone calls were made to the Deputy Prime Minister's office, a very courteous but, unfortunately, not helpful secretary said there were no kits and no material available. This is just a little thing. I recognize, as my good friend the hon. member for Welland (Mr. Railton) has said—I listened to him carefully—that this is a very big undertaking. Other hon. members in the House realize that. But quite frankly, the trouble with this little act of neglect by the government is that it is symbolic of the manner in which this act has been approached.

● (2152)

In 1972 in British Columbia, the then minister of the environment for the government indicated that we did not need to worry about tanker routes down the west coast because the trump card was the overland Mackenzie pipeline. It was not clear from that whether he meant an oil and gas pipeline, but clearly the thinking with respect to the supply of energy in this country was confused. In 1971 it was decided deliberately not to encourage our American friends to count on any Canadian co-operation for an oil pipeline. I suspect Americans got the message in those days, and no doubt they had reason to believe that would apply to a gas pipeline as well.

The record of backing into a phony energy crisis in the winter of 1973-74 does not put the government in a very good light, looking back on it in hindsight. Generally speaking, the entire approach of the government to the energy problems we are facing seems to be symbolized by the fact that not even hon. members received copies of the material which had already been distributed in the Yukon, to the press and to senior members of the public service.

The Americans have managed to deal with this problem more expeditiously than the government of Canada. I do not want to inject a note of irritation at this late hour, but it is nonsense to listen to anyone on the government side suggesting it is the fault of the opposition that this bill has not been passed days or weeks ago. The American Congress passed its bill weeks ago. In the middle of the summer, the hon. Leader

of the Opposition (Mr. Clark) asked the government to introduce legislation as quickly as possible. For reasons only the government knows, suddenly we are faced now with the bill. We are told it must be passed immediately. The inference is that if anyone wants to ask any questions about it, somehow he is working against the national interest.

To further illustrate the necessity of hon. members of the opposition asking questions, I should like to refer to the matter raised by the hon. member for Welland (Mr. Railton). He discussed the specifications as to pipe size, which are apparently in front of the National Energy Board, at the same time as they are in front of an American regulatory authority. The inference was that we must not become disturbed about this, and that basically any of the pipe can be made in Canada. Perhaps this is so in so far as size is concerned, but the hon. member for Welland pointed out that the question of high pressure indeed is something different. The hon. member for Welland indicated there was no reason to doubt the estimates of 100,000 man-years of employment that this project would provide for Canadians.

I realize the hon. member for Welland is not given to making incautious or inaccurate statements, but what is forgotten is that the estimate of 100,000 man-years was received by the government from the company itself. I am not criticizing the company for giving that estimate. I am not criticizing the government for saying that is an estimate which should receive serious consideration. But that estimate is based on the manufacture of 48-inch low pressure pipe, which was the pipe advocated by the company from the start. If some other pipe is to be made—and I am not talking about 54-inch pipe which can be made in Canada—such as the 48-inch high pressure pipe, perhaps it can be manufactured by one plant in Canada, but there will be severe problems from corporate and union sources in the installation of this pipe and the expertise which is required. As the hon. member has pointed out, there is very little experience in the handling of that pipe.

This afternoon I asked the Deputy Prime Minister and President of Privy Council (Mr. MacEachen) the following:

I wonder whether the Deputy Prime Minister and President of Privy Council would answer a question relating to the option now being studied as to 48-inch low pressure pipe, 48-inch high pressure pipe or 54-inch pipe. Would he indicate to the House at this time any estimate of what differences there would be in the estimates that so far have been put forward in terms of man-years available on this project if, for instance, the selection was other than the 48-inch low pressure pipe, which the company has recommended from the start, or the 54-inch pipe, which is also capable of being produced in Canada, as opposed to the 48-inch high pressure pipe, in the sense that this may not be easily produced in Canada and may have to be obtained offshore from the United States or some other country? Can the minister give us any estimate of what difference it would make in total man-years of work?

I asked him how the changes in the specifications would affect the number of man-years of work. He replied that he did not know. Presumably the government has not studied this at all, yet we are asked to hurry this debate. My responsibilities are for labour in this caucus; thus this question is of great concern to me. We do not know what the difference in specifications will mean to the number of man-years of work.