

most important economic matters facing our country today is the question of the transport of oil, gas and so on from the Yukon and Alaska I wish to ask the Minister of Transport whether there is a task force now operating to the end that problems of environmental difficulty and so on will not come into being should the suggestion be accepted to build a railway from the north having its initial terminus in Saskatchewan which, with objectivity and great personal restraint, I suggest should be in Prince Albert?

Hon. Jean Marchand (Minister of Transport): Mr. Speaker, as the right hon. gentleman knows, so far as oil and gas are concerned they come under the authority of my colleagues the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources and the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development. So far as other highways or railways in the north are concerned, we are negotiating with the British Columbia and Alberta governments.

I met with Mr. Peacock, the minister of industry and commerce, to see how we could develop highways to the north, including the Mackenzie highway, and how we can relate the British Columbia Railway to the CNR so that we can move farther into the north. Of course, this is all related to the resources that can be exploited, and we will have to wait a little longer to see what is discovered by the companies that exist now and by the department of energy.

Mr. Diefenbaker: Mr. Speaker, I thank the minister very much for his full answer. He mentioned Alberta and British Columbia. I should like to ask him whether or not the most appropriate route would not be through Saskatchewan, and what is the estimate today of the cost of such a railway through British Columbia and Alberta with the terminus I mentioned in Saskatchewan. Have any such estimates been made?

Mr. Marchand (Langelier): Mr. Speaker, as I said, I have met with the minister of industry and commerce from Alberta and with the premier of British Columbia. I have not yet met with the premier of Saskatchewan. I intend to do so. I think we will have to study the whole question of transportation in the north in consultation with the provinces. Whenever those studies are complete I will be happy to make a report to the hon. gentleman.

Mr. Diefenbaker: Has any estimate of the cost been made by these several task forces which have been set up apparently to look into this matter?

Mr. Marchand (Langelier): Yes. Some have been estimated and others have not been estimated yet.

PROPOSED ALASKA OIL PIPELINE—REPRESENTATIONS TO THE UNITED STATES

Mr. Erik Nielsen (Yukon): Mr. Speaker, I was interested to hear the minister say he was in consultation with members of the governments of British Columbia and Alberta. I was most disappointed not to hear him say that he was in consultation with the elected representatives of the people of the north concerning these matters. My supplementary is directed to the Minister of Energy, Mines and

Oral Questions

Resources. In view of the report that President Nixon has indicated that legislation will be introduced in the United States which will have the effect of voiding the decision of the court in respect of the construction of the Alyeska line, and in view of the fact that President Nixon apparently stated his preference for the sea route, has the minister himself or has the Secretary of State for External Affairs renewed the protest Canada sent to the United States some time ago?

Hon. Donald S. Macdonald (Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources): Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned to the hon. member for Calgary North yesterday, we made representations some 11 months ago to the United States administration leading to the construction of an oil pipeline down the Mackenzie corridor rather than through the Alyeska route. The United States administration decided then, and apparently has renewed the decision, to proceed by way of the Alyeska route, although I think it is fair to point out that this question will have to go back to the court of first instance. Mr. Justice Hart will now have to evaluate the possibility of a Canadian route, so it may be some years before there is a full judgment on this question. I would expect that the studies done in Canada will be very germane to that judgment.

* * *

TRANSPORT

WEST COAST MARINE PILOTS—GOVERNMENT ACTION TO AVERT POSSIBLE STRIKE

Mr. Les Benjamin (Regina-Lake Centre): Mr. Speaker, may I direct a question to the Minister of Transport. This question does come under federal jurisdiction. In view of the threat of a strike to take effect at midnight tonight by the B.C. Coast Pilots Association, and in view of the representations telegraphed to him by the premier of Saskatchewan, could the minister tell us what action he has taken to have negotiations resumed immediately?

• (1510)

Hon. Jean Marchand (Minister of Transport): Mr. Speaker, I think that the parties are meeting right now. However, I should emphasize that this is a very peculiar situation because both the pilots' organization and the employers' organization are companies registered under British Columbia laws. They are not unions as defined in the Canada Labour Code.

Mr. Benjamin: In view of the fact the B.C. Pacific Pilotage Authority reports to the Minister of Transport and that most of the proposals of the British Columbia Coast Pilots Association call for improvements in the working conditions, safety procedures and safety equipment, will the minister instruct the B.C. Pacific Pilotage Authority to resume negotiations? Will he also assure the authority that there will be adequate funds to meet the proposals of the pilots regarding safety procedures and working conditions?

Mr. Marchand (Langelier): I do not intend to instruct the pilotage authority, and I wonder whether I have this authority under the law. Negotiations are proceeding