

Mackenzie Valley Pipeline

times, should have had the effect of preventing more members from taking part in the debate today. A great deal of time has been used up dealing with procedural matters. Fortunately, we have got that amendment out of the way.

Some of us on this side were amazed by the suggestion that a committee be formed to deal with this matter. Mr. Speaker, when those of us who are interested in energy matters attend meetings of the committee on national resources we sometimes have to wait for as long as 50 minutes after the time officially appointed for the meeting to begin before one member of the official opposition turns up.

Some hon. Members: Oh!

Mr. Gillespie: We hear a lot of noise from the other side about the need to discuss these energy issues, but when a committee is set up to do so we have to wait for 50 minutes for one of their members to turn up.

Mr. Baldwin: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker, the minister should know the rules well enough to realize that Your Honour has ruled against the amendment. It should not therefore be discussed. If the hon. gentleman has any reasonable contribution to make, let him make it now.

Mr. Gillespie: Perhaps the hon. member will be able to persuade some of his colleagues to show a greater interest in energy matters. His own chief energy critic—I do not know whether he made an error or not, but the record will show it—said that if the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Clark) were the prime minister of this country—

An hon. Member: A natural slip!

Mr. Gillespie: The hon. member said that if the Leader of the Opposition were prime minister he would abolish the National Energy Board.

Some hon. Members: Oh!

Mr. Gillespie: Are we to take that party seriously?

● (1530)

The hon. member for St. John's West (Mr. Crosbie) said that if the Leader of the Opposition were Prime Minister he would abolish the NEB. Now, I ask you—

Mr. Paproski: You know that is a lie, Alastair.

Mr. Baker (Grenville-Carleton): I rise on a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please. The hon. member for Grenville-Carleton is rising on a point of order.

Mr. Baker (Grenville-Carleton): With respect, Mr. Speaker, the remarks which were made just now by the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources (Mr. Gillespie) were the worst form of pettifogging that I have heard in a long time. The Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources knows, because he was here, that the record was corrected, and corrected proper-

[Mr. Gillespie.]

ly, and he ought not to leave that impression. Perhaps he will enhance what little reputation he has by getting on with the debate.

Mr. Gillespie: I am very pleased that the record was corrected, Mr. Speaker, but I point out it was corrected by a member on this side. I believe the Leader of the Opposition has also corrected the record as far as his remarks on Monday night are concerned.

Mr. Baker (Grenville-Carleton): You have no record to correct.

Mr. Gillespie: We are dealing here with an important national question, one particularly important to the people of the north. If I may have the attention of hon. members opposite I should like to make a few remarks in respect thereto.

I believe that Mr. Justice Berger's report was one of the most significant the country has received and will certainly set a new standard in terms of its approach and its impact. I very much appreciate the work that the author has done, because I think he has done his job well. Indeed I think his eloquence in the report speaks for itself. I am sure that both he and the many people who appeared before his inquiry will want this House and all those who are interested to take longer than the four days that we have had since his report was made public to digest what he said, to reflect upon it, and to reach our own conclusions respecting the many complex and difficult issues that he has addressed.

He dealt, as we know, with two main questions, the question of the impact, social and environmental, and the economic impact. He dealt as well—and this part has yet to be completed—with some of the conditions that should be imposed in the event that a decision is made to have a pipeline down the Mackenzie Valley.

He did not deal, of course, with another issue, a very important issue, nor was he asked to deal with it, that is, the question of the national interest. That is why the National Energy Board report is so important. Parliament assigned this equally difficult responsibility to the National Energy Board and it is still in the process of conducting its inquiry, with a report expected early in the month of July.

As the House knows, the government has consistently taken the position that a decision on whether it would be in the Canadian interest to approve a northern gas line at this time should be taken once all the evidence is before it, and that it would be premature to reach a conclusion until all issues have been examined in depth and set out fully so that they can be assessed together. There was never any doubt, at least in the mind of the government, that a northern pipeline along whichever route might seem desirable could have significant consequences for the lives and futures of the people living along the route. It was, in fact, that very concern which prompted the Mackenzie Valley pipeline inquiry in the first place.

There is, however, another very grave concern, and that is the energy future of this country, and the role that frontier