

Oral Questions

In this morning's *Globe and Mail* there is a statement attributed to the Deputy Prime Minister to the effect that some changes might be made to Petro-Canada just by resorting to administrative measures, this being in complete contradiction to the commitment made to this House by the Prime Minister that there would be no changes to Petro-Canada without parliamentary approval. Can the Deputy Prime Minister give us an assurance that no change will be made to Petro-Canada without first coming to this House and getting its approval for such changes?

Hon. Walter Baker (President of the Privy Council and Minister of National Revenue): Mr. Speaker, I don't know where the "flip" is, but I certainly know where the "flop" is.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Baker (Nepean-Carleton): The Prime Minister made the position of the government quite clear when he answered a question from the hon. member, I believe, with respect to that matter. If there is to be a change with respect to Petro-Canada, then that matter will be brought to the House of Commons. I think that was undertaken; it was made clear. There was nothing said by me yesterday or on any other occasion that in any way detracted from that, despite what my hon. friend may have taken out of what he read on the front page of a newspaper.

● (1120)

Mr. Lalonde: Mr. Speaker, I thank the Deputy Prime Minister for his answer and I am glad to have his assurance that no change will be made to Petro-Canada without coming to the House. However, since we also heard yesterday on this issue that the government had, for all practical purposes, rejected the recommendations of the task force, or at least certainly had not adopted as yet as government policy the recommendations of the task force, will he take the necessary steps to put an end to the contract whereby Mr. McDougall is criss-crossing this country selling the task force proposals which have not yet been endorsed by this government; and, if not, can he tell us how much this particular unemployed person is getting for his services while this government is thinking about cutting back on family allowances and on benefits for the genuinely unemployed in this country?

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Baker (Nepean-Carleton): Mr. Speaker, there has been an extension, so I am advised, of 15 days beyond which Mr. McDougall will not be going across the country. Let me just say to the hon. gentleman, so that he will understand, that the trips, meetings and speeches of Mr. McDougall are not meant to sell the document Mr. McDougall and his colleagues prepared for the consideration of the government, but to explain its purport and its intent.

The hon. member ought to know that the document Mr. McDougall prepared, among other matters, is presently before the cabinet. The cabinet is not bound to adopt that scenario or any other scenario. The cabinet will be considering all matters

[Mr. Lalonde.]

with respect to that before making a decision. As the Prime Minister said the other day, as I reiterated again today and repeat again, when that decision is made, the House of Commons will be the first to know about it.

Mr. Lalonde: How much is he getting?

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ENERGY

NATURAL GAS PIPELINE TO ATLANTIC PROVINCES

Mr. Russell MacLellan (Cape Breton-The Sydneys): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the President of the Privy Council and it concerns what seems to be the policy of the government that a natural gas pipeline may go to the Atlantic provinces. If, in fact, the government is committed to self-sufficiency by 1990, why can the government not give a commitment to the Atlantic provinces that in fact a natural gas pipeline will go to the Atlantic provinces?

Hon. Walter Baker (President of the Privy Council and Minister of National Revenue): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for a very important question. I want the hon. member to know that the Government of Canada is discussing quite actively with the governments of the Atlantic provinces that very point, that is, the extension of the pipeline. We, as a government, take it that we cannot talk about self-sufficiency at any period of time unless such a pipeline is built, and we are discussing the question actively now with the governments.

Mr. MacLellan: Mr. Speaker, does the President of the Privy Council understand and take into consideration the fact that a reversible natural gas pipeline to the maritime provinces would be a very important factor in determining whether natural gas will actually be extracted from off the coast of Nova Scotia?

Mr. Baker (Nepean-Carleton): Mr. Speaker, my friend will recall that during the course of the election campaign that very matter was discussed by the Prime Minister when he was seeking that office. That matter is under discussion and is within the contemplation of the government in the discussions which are taking place with the Atlantic provinces.

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INDIAN AFFAIRS

ALLEGED DEPARTMENTAL INTERFERENCE IN AFFAIRS OF CHIEFS AND BAND COUNCILS

Mr. Stanley Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development. It deals with a matter which may be a case of misunderstanding, but at least it is an irritant with which I hope the minister can deal.

In view of complaints by chiefs and band councils that there is departmental interference down the line, as it were, in the