

and await the further major reports to be issued in the near future by the National Energy Board, one dealing with an update on the demand and supply side of our oil energy reserves and the other dealing in detail with the northern pipeline proposals currently before it, as well as the benefit of parliamentary debate before making its final judgment on this most important matter?

Hon. Allan J. MacEachen (Acting Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, quite apart from any comment on the position taken by any other party, I want to make it clear on behalf of the government that no decisions have been made with respect, (a) to a pipeline and, (b) to the route of any such possible pipeline; that we regard the delivery of the Berger report as a very important element, providing very valuable information in the total context about a decision. However, it is certainly the intention of the government to await the report of the National Energy Board and other relevant reports before a decision is taken on this question. That is the general position.

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NORTHERN AFFAIRS

DRILLING IN BEAUFORT SEA—DATE OF DECISION ON RENEWAL OF PERMIT OF DOME PETROLEUM

Mr. Stuart Leggatt (New Westminster): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development. One of the world's great experts on oil blowouts, Mr. Red Adair, said yesterday that a blowout in the Arctic is inevitable as long as drilling is done there; pray to God it does not happen but there will be an accident as long as men drill for oil. Eventually someone will make a mistake. In view of the clear indication from Red Adair and the evidence before the Standing Committee on Fisheries and the Environment by the Assistant Deputy Minister of the Environment opposing drilling in the Arctic, and in view of the overwhelming evidence in the Berger report of risk to the ecology, will the minister advise what date cabinet is going to come down with a decision on the renewal of the Dome Petroleum drilling permits and also advise whether it is his view that drilling should continue in the present circumstance?

Hon. Warren Allmand (Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development): Mr. Speaker, I will give my advice to the cabinet committee. No date has been set for a decision on this matter. It is still a completely open question. Perhaps I will get in touch with Mr. Adair and talk to him about it.

● (1440)

DRILLING IN BEAUFORT SEA—PROTESTS FROM UNITED STATES

Mr. Stuart Leggatt (New Westminster): A supplementary on the same subject. Yesterday, the Minister of the Environment told the House that representations had been received from the United States regarding the risk to U.S. waters as a result of Beaufort Sea drilling but he was not able to be specific. Could the hon. gentleman be more specific today and

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tell us whether the United States has made any protest, and, further, whether any agreement has been discussed under which the United States would be compensated in the event of an oil spill damaging to its interests?

Hon. Warren Allmand (Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development): I know that representations have been made and discussions held. But that took place with the Department of External Affairs, not with my department, although the views expressed were communicated to us. In the arrangements for drilling last summer, provision was made to compensate all the parties, including the United States, in the event of a blow-out. Whether there have been further representations with regard to that aspect, I am not certain.

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LABOUR CONDITIONS

LACK OF WAGE PARITY BETWEEN HALIFAX AND SAINT JOHN LONGSHOREMEN—GOVERNMENT ACTION

Mr. Robert McCleave (Halifax-East Hants): Mr. Speaker, may I direct my question to the Minister of Labour in the absence of the Minister of Finance? It arises from the historical relationship involving parity of wages between Halifax and Saint John longshoremen. Since wages at the two ports are now somewhat apart due to technicalities enforced by the Anti-Inflation Board arising mainly from the difference in the yearly starting dates of the contracts, would the hon. gentleman use his good offices to carry out the warm statement of the Minister of Finance when replying to me with regard to this matter at the dawn of the Anti-Inflation Program?

Hon. John C. Munro (Minister of Labour): I shall certainly look into the matter, Mr. Speaker.

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CANADIAN NATIONAL RAILWAYS

STATUS OF EMPLOYEES' PASSES AFTER IMPLEMENTATION OF VIA RAIL SYSTEM

Mr. J. M. Forrestall (Dartmouth-Halifax East): Mr. Speaker, I have a brief question for the Minister of Transport. In order to alleviate certain anxieties expressed by many employees and pensioners of Canadian National Railways, would the minister check with the company, or have an inquiry made to determine whether or not the system of railway passes for employees and pensioners will be continued once the proposed Via rail system is in place?

Hon. Otto E. Lang (Minister of Transport): I shall be pursuing this question. I have received many representations with regard to it from pensioners and others and I understand their great interest in the continuation of their rights and privileges.