

Oral Questions

government at that time was in full possession of the clarification, including being aware of the fact that there was one answer for the gas pipeline and another answer for the oil pipeline.

An hon. Member: A lot of gas.

Mr. Baldwin: Hogwash.

TAPS TANKER ROUTE—ALLEGED DELAY IN PRESENTING CANADIAN POSITION TO UNITED STATES—GOVERNMENT ACTION TO CORRECT

Mr. John A. Fraser (Vancouver South): My supplementary question is again to the Prime Minister, although he may wish to refer it to the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources. In view of the fact that the TAPS proposal has been a matter of concern both for the U.S. government and the government of Canada for several years, and in view of the Prime Minister's repeated assurances that the Canadian position had been clearly and forcefully presented throughout to the U.S. government, can the Prime Minister inform the House why it was not until July 16, 1973 that the government finally presented to the U.S. government the full Canadian position?

Hon. Donald S. Macdonald (Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources): That is not correct. The Canadian position was communicated to the American authorities as far back as May 1972 to Secretary Morton. The most recent statement, as I pointed out to the hon. gentleman, was communicated to them on July 6. If the state department chose not to pass on that information, I cannot be held accountable for that.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Fraser: I might point out to the Secretary of State for External Affairs—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. Perhaps the hon. member would like to ask the supplementary question.

Mr. Fraser: Again I direct my supplementary question to the Prime Minister who once again may wish to defer to the minister. In view of the fact that the government did not advise the House of the U.S. inquiries and the government's replies, and in view of the fact that the existence of such replies was only released to the press after my questions of July 6, can the Prime Minister now advise the House as to exactly what immediate steps the Prime Minister is prepared to take directly with the U.S. government to correct the damage done by this incredibly inept piece of nineteenth century quill pen diplomacy?

Mr. Macdonald (Rosedale): Mr. Speaker, as the hon. gentleman should know, the answers given to the State Department were repetitions of answers given to him and to others in public, and indeed some were direct quotations of answers given in this House. In other words, there was no new statement of policy involved in that.

[Mr. Macdonald (Rosedale).]

TAPS TANKER ROUTE—REASON FOR FAILURE TO COMMUNICATE CANADIAN POSITION THROUGH DIPLOMATIC CHANNELS

Hon. Robert L. Stanfield (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, I would like to direct a supplementary question to the Secretary of State for External Affairs. Why did he not communicate the change in the Canadian position, announced on July 6, in response to the questionnaire submitted by the United States Secretary of State, as would be the usual way? In other words why did he not, through his department, communicate formally with the U.S. Secretary of State rather than leaving it for the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources to write a letter to the U.S. ambassador accredited in Ottawa?

Hon. Mitchell Sharp (Secretary of State for External Affairs): Mr. Speaker, it is not unusual, in relations between Canada and the United States, for my colleagues to communicate with their counterparts in the United States, or in response to inquiries in their specialized fields, and I think the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources did the usual thing in his usual, efficient way.

Mr. Stanfield: Did not the Secretary of State for External Affairs, through his department, make a formal response to the questionnaire as of June 27, I believe it was? Did not the Department of External Affairs make that communication to the Secretary of State?

Hon. Donald S. Macdonald (Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources): Mr. Speaker, perhaps I might respond to that because the American Embassy did not communicate with the Department of External Affairs but communicated directly with my department. It was for that reason that my department responded, and the actual communication was made through the Canadian embassy in Washington with the State Department, but of course communication was going on at the same time with the American embassy here in Ottawa after we received the inquiry.

Mr. Stanfield: Is it correct then to draw the conclusion that the Prime Minister and his government have taken this matter so seriously and have been so concerned, that the correct position of the government of Canada was communicated by letter to the United States ambassador to Canada some four days after it was published in Canada and, as a result of this inept and careless proceeding, this did not get to the United States Congress until July 16?

Mr. Speaker: Order. I am sure the Leader of the Opposition will appreciate that a question asked in those terms is not in order.

TAPS TANKER ROUTE—POSSIBILITY OF DELIVERING OIL TO POINTS IN UNITED STATES SOUTH OF VANCOUVER ISLAND

Mr. Randolph Harding (Kootenay West): Mr. Speaker, I wish to direct a supplementary question to the Secretary of State for External Affairs. In view of the potentially tremendous oil hazard to the coast of British Columbia, and in particular to that part of the seacoast which would be affected by a major oil spill in the Strait of Juan de