

Oral Questions

much of it in the hard-hit industrial areas of central Canada, and about \$2 billion annually in our balance of trade position?

Hon. Herb Gray (Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce): Madam Speaker, no, I could not.

Mr. Nickerson: Madam Speaker, I think I will try the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources to see if he will be a little more forthcoming. I am very alarmed at the indecision, procrastination and evident inability of the present government to deal with the outstanding pipeline issues.

Will the government quit pussyfooting around with the pipeline and ensure that both the pre-build section and the Alaska gas pipeline in its entirety will be built as expeditiously as possible?

● (1420)

Hon. Marc Lalonde (Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources): Madam Speaker, the hon. member has made a very interesting representation, and I am sure cabinet will consider it.

CONSIDERATION BY PARLIAMENT BEFORE LEGISLATION
CHANGED

Mr. Harvie Andre (Calgary Centre): Madam Speaker, may I put a supplementary question to the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources? According to the Prime Minister, the government is actively considering whether to authorize this pre-build section in spite of assurances by Senator Olson, the minister responsible for northern pipelines, before a committee of this House that such permission would not be given until there were guarantees for the entire pipeline, as spelled out in the act.

Will the minister assure the House that the government will approach Parliament to seek permission for a major change in both the intent and purpose of the Northern Pipeline Act prior to granting any such approval?

[Translation]

Hon. Marc Lalonde (Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources): Madam Speaker, I have already answered that very question in the House last week.

[English]

Mr. Andre: Apparently the minister is reluctant to give his assurance to the House at this point, Madam Speaker.

An hon. Member: He gave it last week.

Mr. Andre: The minister is aware that the purpose of this pre-build is to provide transportation facilities to carry the export gas approved by the previous government on December 6, 1979. The minister, then opposition energy critic, described that decision as "one that Canada will live to regret and it may go down in history as one of the greatest sell-outs we have seen."

Given that the government is now looking at ways to authorize this transportation or this sell-out, did the minister flip-flop on his own, or have his cabinet colleagues talked him into changing his position since December 6 last?

Mr. Lalonde: Definitely not, Madam Speaker; definitely not.

Mr. Baker (Nepean-Carleton): But you did flip-flop.

LEGISLATION TO AMEND NORTHERN PIPELINE ACT

Mr. Ian Waddell (Vancouver-Kingsway): Madam Speaker, the matter of this pipeline is a serious issue and the minister should not get out of it. Let me put my question to the President of the Privy Council, if he is there.

Mr. Nielsen: He is not all there.

Mr. Waddell: It is quite clear, Madam Speaker, that in 1978 Parliament approved the Northern Pipeline Act which authorized a pipeline for American gas to be transported from Alaska to the lower 48. The National Energy Board has recommended a pre-build pipeline which will export Canadian gas to the United States.

Can the President of the Privy Council, the government House leader, assure this House that before such a fundamental change is made, legislation will be brought before the House, and that this will not be done behind closed doors by an order in council?

Hon. Marc Lalonde (Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources): Madam Speaker, I should like to draw the attention of the hon. member to the act that was passed by this House in 1978. If he reads the Northern Pipeline Act, he will see clearly what its provisions are. I have already stated in this House, and I repeat, that nothing will be done by the government that is contrary to the provisions of the act passed by Parliament.

Mr. Andre: The intent of the act is what we are interested in.

Mr. Waddell: Madam Speaker, I have read the act in some detail. That is still not an answer to our question.

ALASKA GAS PIPELINE—EFFECT ON CANADA'S ENERGY FUTURE

Mr. Ian Waddell (Vancouver-Kingsway): May I put a supplementary question to the Prime Minister, Madam Speaker? I find it shocking that the minister will not bring this before the House. In light of what was stated in the throne speech about self-sufficiency, and in light of the government's own policy of "off" oil, changing basically the use of oil to natural gas and other energy sources, but basically gas, if the pre-build goes ahead would the Prime Minister not agree that the construction of this export gas pipeline would jeopardize Canada's energy future?