

Oral Questions

CANADIAN POLICY

Mr. Steven W. Langdon (Essex—Windsor): Mr. Speaker, surely the Minister recognizes that a diversion from Lake Michigan would have a serious impact on water levels in Lake Huron, Lake Erie and Lake St. Clair, and would affect all the communities along the Canadian side of those lakes.

The Government of Canada, in a statement tabled at public meetings held by the IJC in 1983, stated its "longstanding opposition to unilateral increases in diversions from the Great Lakes system", and its view that "such proposals should be considered only after consultation and agreement between Canada and the U.S." Therefore, is the Minister saying that his Government has changed that policy and we are no longer taking the position that we must agree to any water diversion from Lake Michigan?

Hon. Tom McMillan (Minister of the Environment): Mr. Speaker, there is no change in policy. Canada has not been approached formally by the U.S. administration about any decision the U.S. Government has taken or is even contemplating taking on this question. All we have is an idea or proposal from one state Governor, that being Governor Thompson of Illinois, who is trying to do the very thing which has been proposed by all kinds of different state Governors over the years in connection with one water situation or another. In almost every case there has been as much resistance within the U.S. to what was proposed as there has been in Canada.

In any event, we expect to be consulted. We expect to be informed. Ultimately, if there were to be any diversion, which we do not expect, we would expect our concurrence to be granted before the project could be proceeded with. However, the matter is totally academic. It is only a proposal and no decision has been made, much less it is likely to happen.

REQUEST FOR GOVERNMENT ASSURANCE ON POSSIBLE
DIVERSION OF WATER

Mr. Steven W. Langdon (Essex—Windsor): Mr. Speaker, it may be academic for the Minister; it is not academic for the hundreds of communities along the Great Lakes that will be affected by this kind of diversion.

I put it to the Minister as straightforwardly as I can, that he said previously that there was not a Canadian role in this as far as agreement was concerned. It was an American decision with respect to American water. Is he now prepared to stand up and very clearly tell this House that we will insist, as we have in the past, that there be Canadian agreement before any diversion takes place?

Hon. Tom McMillan (Minister of the Environment): Mr. Speaker, as far as any diversion is concerned the answer is yes. I am saying as clearly as I can that any such diversion from Lake Michigan within the U.S. would have profound implications for Canada. It would have profound implications for navigation, for recreation, and for commercial interests. We oppose it in the strongest possible terms. However, it is only a

proposal. It has to go through a labyrinth of complex legal obstacles in the U.S.

As long as we are making our views known, and as long as we have a commitment from the U.S. Government to consult us at every stage along the way, and ultimately we are in a position to oppose the diversion if the Americans were ever stupid enough to proceed with it, I think the Hon. Member should not be so exercised.

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NATIONAL ENERGY BOARD

DECISION ON NATURAL GAS EXPORTS TO UNITED STATES

Mr. Russell MacLellan (Cape Breton—The Sydneys): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Acting Prime Minister. Yesterday the Minister of Energy was asked what the Government was going to do to ensure that some of Canada's natural gas was reserved for use by Canadians when the Americans already have one-third of our total reserves under long-term contract. We learned the answer when listening to the speech of the President of the Treasury Board yesterday in Calgary. She said in effect it really does not matter if the Conservatives lose the next election because we cannot make any change to our energy policy anyway, it is enshrined in stone under the free trade agreement. It is really under the jurisdiction of Washington to make decisions as to whether any changes are going to be made.

Why does Washington now control our energy policy? Why did the Government feel it necessary to have Washington make these decisions on Canadian energy policy?

Mr. Jack Shields (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources): Mr. Speaker, the National Energy Board decision on the Pan-Alberta application was and is based on procedures developed and announced prior to completion of the Canada-U.S. Free Trade Agreement. There is no direct link between that agreement and the NEB decision. It is clear, however, that as U.S. buyers are becoming more confident in stability of supply in the Canada-U.S. energy environment, we are going to have more sales to the U.S.

GOVERNMENT POSITION

Mr. Russell MacLellan (Cape Breton—The Sydneys): Mr. Speaker, there is a significant impact involved in the decision of the NEB on the Pan-Alberta Gas proposal. That impact is that under the free trade agreement the NEB has had its powers almost completely stripped away. It is nothing more than a monitoring agency. It cannot turn down those requests. More and more of our natural gas is to be destined for delivery to the U.S. and Canadians will not have access to it. I take great exception to the President of the Treasury Board saying it does not matter who you vote for, you cannot change energy policy—