

Oral Questions

House that he will not agree to the change proposed by the NEB?

Hon. Marc Lalonde (Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources): Madam Speaker, I have already agreed to the change made by the NEB.

REASONS FOR ACCEPTANCE OF CHANGE IN FORMULA

Hon. Edward Broadbent (Oshawa): Madam Speaker, I should like to ask the following supplementary question. A previous Liberal government in the early 1970s, which was also under pressure by the oil businesses to increase exports, relied on a formula that then included unproven reserves, and fantasized about having a 900 year supply of gas, which turned out to be completely false. I want to ask the minister what the government's motive is in now changing its formula, particularly when the National Energy Board said in a report issued last fall that we do not have sufficient supplies of gas to increase natural gas exports.

● (1425)

Hon. Marc Lalonde (Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources): Madam Speaker, the National Energy Board has recommended taking into account not only established reserves but also what is known as trend gas, which is—

Some hon. Members: Unknown!

Mr. Lalonde: If the Leader of the New Democratic Party will hold his horses, he will get the answer he is looking for. We are taking into account not only established reserves but what is known as trend gas. This change in the formula will allow the NEB to establish the potential surplus. That having been done, the NEB is now going to hold hearings on the various export applications before it, and also on whether or not there is a surplus which can be exported. At the present time there is no conclusion that there should be more export licences approved, or that there is—

Mr. Broadbent: That is why they changed the formula.

Mr. Lalonde:—a definite surplus to be exported. My hon. friend will have to wait for the result of the next two phases of the NEB hearings. After that we will know whether there is a large surplus which can be exported, and who the successful applicants are. For the time being the Board has made a change in the formula which, in the view of the Board, takes into account in a more realistic way the reserves which are available in Canada.

EXPORT OF LOW-COST GAS

Hon. Edward Broadbent (Oshawa): Madam Speaker, the minister knows this is extremely serious; it goes to the heart of the energy future of the country. He also knows that under the existing formula the NEB itself has said we do not have a surplus, therefore it is changing the formula. Will the minister

admit that, under the proposed formula he has sanctioned, Canadians could end up in the years ahead, having sold off our low-cost gas on the hypothetical possibility that some reserves will materialize in the future, having gotten rid of our low-cost gas and having replaced it with very high-cost gas, or possibly no gas at all in the future? Is that what the minister is committing himself to?

Hon. Marc Lalonde (Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources): No, Madam Speaker.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

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THE ECONOMY

HEARINGS CONDUCTED IN MONTREAL BY GOVERNMENT
MINISTERS AND SUPPORTERS

Mr. Don Blenkarn (Mississauga South): Madam Speaker, my question is for the Minister of State, the hon. member for Hochelaga-Maisonneuve. Would the Minister of State—

Mr. Crosbie: For nothing.

Mr. Blenkarn:—advise this House whether the public hearings that he and his colleagues from Montreal are holding are conducted by him in his capacity as Minister of State?

Madam Speaker: Order, please. I am afraid that question cannot be answered by the hon. minister since it does not pertain to his ministerial duties.

Mr. Andre: What are they?

Mr. Crosbie: What are his responsibilities?

Mr. Blenkarn: Madam Speaker, I accept your ruling, but I am asking him a question with respect to his capacity as Minister of State. If that is not permitted, may I ask a question of the Prime Minister?

Madam Speaker: That is fine.

Mr. Blenkarn: Madam Speaker, will the Prime Minister advise whether members of Parliament from Montreal, including the Minister of State and the Minister of National Health and Welfare, are conducting public hearings on government business, as members of the government, as to concerns with respect to unemployment and economic matters affecting people throughout Canada? Are these government inquiries, or are they private ventures by the members on their own?

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Madam Speaker, the hon. member knows that in our system of government the members of the executive are also members of Parliament, and they can and do act in both capacities.

Mr. Andre: In which capacity are they acting?