

ment is seriously considering entering into partnership so as to make the project viable?

Hon. Donald S. Macdonald (Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources): I met with the Syncrude partners—or the remaining partners—yesterday and discussed the state of the project with them. It has been agreed, with the approval of Alberta, that federal officials may attend tomorrow to get a full briefing from the Syncrude partners on the state of the project and some of the difficulties it faces. I understand that next week the government of Alberta will consider whether or not it should take part in the project. Our own participation would be subject to a full understanding of the costs, the problems involved, and, of course, the consent of the government of Alberta and, in the final analysis, our judgment as to whether this would make a significant contribution to Canadian oil policy.

Mr. Symes: Bearing in mind the lack of option open to the government if sufficient oil supplies are to be available by the 1980's and if Alberta does agree that the federal government may be involved, is the hon. gentleman prepared to take an equity interest in this project?

Mr. Macdonald (Rosedale): As I indicated in my answer, the Alberta government has not yet decided whether the federal government should be allowed to become involved or not. The question can only be answered next week when we have a clear indication both of the facts and of Alberta government policy.

Mr. Symes: Since it is not likely that the oil sands will be developed as planned unless there is federal involvement, and since conventional oil exploration has dropped off faster than was anticipated by the National Energy Board, will the minister tell us what contingency plans the government has in mind to meet the likelihood of a deficit in oil supplies earlier than anticipated? For example, is the government prepared to buy certain existing oil leases and itself undertake exploration for conventional oil?

Mr. Macdonald (Rosedale): As the hon. member may know, we have a measure on the order paper to place the federal government in a position of having an operating entity in the petroleum field. As to the balance of the question, it is hypothetical at this point.

SYNCRUDE PROJECT—POSSIBLE STEPS TO ENCOURAGE INVESTMENT BY ADDITIONAL PARTNERS

Mr. Bill Jarvis (Perth-Wilmot): In light of the urgent need, as expressed by the hon. member for Sault Ste. Marie, to ensure continued domestic petroleum supply and particularly the development of additional domestic sources, and in light of the obvious consequence of the lowering of world prices by OPEC nations which would be to prohibit such development, I wonder if it is not premature for the minister to tell us now, what steps he proposes to take to improve the situation of those oil groups still involved in the tar sands venture. More particularly, what steps is the minister prepared to take to encourage investment by desperately needed additional partners in that project?

Oral Questions

Hon. Donald S. Macdonald (Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources): I agree with the hon. member's suggestion that this is premature.

[Translation]

POSSIBILITY OF USING GEOTHERMIC SOURCES

Mr. Eudore Allard (Rimouski): Mr. Speaker, I wish to direct a question to the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources.

In view of the fact that, apparently, tar sand development may prove too costly, not to mention the possibility of an energy shortage, can the minister advise the House whether his department has investigated the possibility of tapping geothermic energy?

Hon. Donald S. Macdonald (Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources): Mr. Speaker, I must say that we in Canada do not have the same geothermic energy potential as other countries, such as New Zealand and Iceland. However, we have set up programs to examine all possible energy sources of the future. One of our programs, although limited in scope, is devoted to geothermic energy.

● (1440)

[English]

OIL—POSSIBLE CONVENING OF MEETING OF IMPORTING AND EXPORTING COUNTRIES TO SET PRICES AND ALLOCATE SUPPLIES

Hon. Alvin Hamilton (Qu'Appelle-Moose Mountain): Mr. Speaker, my question is addressed to the Prime Minister and is on the same subject. In view of the statement by the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources about the doubtful development of the tar sands and the position in which this puts eastern Canada in relation to supply, has the Prime Minister had time to consider the question I put to him on October 3, 1974, suggesting that Canada should be the host country to all the oil importing and exporting countries of the world in order to bring about a rule of law on the price and allocation of supply in the world?

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, I cannot remember exactly what my answer was then, but obviously the objective would be a laudable one. The question is whether such a conference could be organized, when it could be held and that kind of thing. I have no position to state on it at this time.

Mr. Hamilton (Qu'Appelle-Moose Mountain): Mr. Speaker, for the purpose of information I would ask whether any approaches have been made to any one of the OPEC nations and, if so, which ones?

Mr. Trudeau: Mr. Speaker, if the hon. member is talking about approaches relative to that type of conference in Canada the answer is no, not so far as I am aware. However, in so far as meetings between consuming and producing nations are concerned, of course this subject has been discussed many times by myself, the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources and by the Minister of Finance. I would say it is on the agenda every time we meet with other ministers, heads of government or heads of state. As late as yesterday and the day before, we were