

Given that concern which the minister expressed about the American action, what specific conservation and management arrangements were arrived at during the past two days with the minister's American counterparts to see that the fisheries stocks on Georges Banks are not depleted in the near future? Was the authority of the Secretary of Commerce, for example, guaranteed, seeing that he has the authority to enforce fisheries management?

Hon. Mark MacGuigan (Secretary of State for External Affairs): Madam Speaker, I had discussions on that matter of a fairly detailed nature with both Secretary Haig and Secretary Baldrige. I believe my colleague, the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, also had discussions on the same matter with Secretary Baldrige. What the United States is undertaking at the present time is to place a management plan before the New England Fisheries Council and to use all of their efforts, both themselves and through Congress, to attempt to have that plan satisfactorily implemented on the east coast.

Miss MacDonald: I am sure the minister is aware that the Secretary of Commerce has the authority to enforce fisheries management. I asked whether that guarantee had been given during their discussions.

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LAW OF THE SEA

RECONSIDERATION OF UNITED STATES POSITION

Hon. Flora MacDonald (Kingston and the Islands): Madam Speaker, I would like to raise another matter which I am sure was discussed during the past two days. It concerns the alarming news out of Washington that the President has dismissed his principal negotiators at the Law of the Sea conference and, indeed, has indicated that the United States wishes to reopen many areas of that very complex negotiation. Since this action by the United States conceivably threatens Canadian interests in its 200-mile economic zone, will the minister tell us what are the specific areas that the United States now wants to renegotiate, and what steps are the various ministers and the Canadian government as a whole taking to protect Canadian interests in this issue and to see that the Law of the Sea conference is brought to a successful conclusion?

Hon. Mark MacGuigan (Secretary of State for External Affairs): Madam Speaker, although this is a multilateral and not a bilateral issue, Secretary Haig and I had quite an extensive discussion on it this morning. The American position is that at the present time they are not objecting to any part or any aspect of the proposed Law of the Sea convention nor to any aspects of the negotiations. They are in effect reserving their position on the whole matter to give their administration time to examine it, without any indications at this time what their final conclusion will be. The changeover in personnel which the hon. member referred to is indeed extensive, as often happens with American administrations where the changes go

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far below changes made here when there is a change of government. As a result of that, Secretary Haig will be starting tomorrow with meetings aimed at this very point to try to resolve their policy in the reasonably near future.

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PIPELINES

ALASKA GAS PIPELINE—UNITED STATES POSITION

Mr. Edward Broadbent (Oshawa): Madam Speaker, I have a question for the Secretary of State for External Affairs who has chosen to interpret vague language by the President of the United States to mean that the Alaska gas pipeline is going to be guaranteed. Is the minister aware that just a couple of hours ago, in an interview, the United States Secretary of State said that if private financing for the pipeline were not available that problem would have to be faced at the time? In light of that assertion, will the minister admit that not only is that not a guarantee, it is the opposite of a guarantee? It is no guarantee at all. He said the problem would have to be faced down the road.

Hon. Mark MacGuigan (Secretary of State for External Affairs): Madam Speaker, I was sitting next to Secretary Haig when he was answering those questions. He was being asked about the way in which this commitment was going to be interpreted by the United States. As I understand it, he said he was not going to get into the various hypotheses that could occur as to whether or not private financing would be readily available. He certainly also assured us that the government would take whatever steps were necessary to make sure that any Congressional facilitation was taken, to the extent that that is under the control of the administration generally, to advance the agreement in every way possible.

Mr. Broadbent: Madam Speaker, I also listened with care to what he had to say. He was saying that if any government regulation would seem to be interfering with private financing, if that was an inhibiting factor, then the U.S. administration would try to clear it up. That is, and again I repeat, anything but a guarantee of the project. In fact it turns it entirely back to the private sector.

In that connection, since President Carter a year ago refused to give guarantees to U.S. private financing—

An hon. Member: No, he didn't.

Mr. Broadbent: He refused to give public guarantees to private financing because the situation was very precarious at that time, and considering that at this very moment we are exporting less through pipelines in Canada to the U.S. than was the case because the demand has been reduced, is there any reason the minister now has for believing the private sector will be any more interested today in raising the money for that project than it was a year ago?