

for the purpose of ascertaining whether railroads would provide an alternative to pipelines and, at the same time, meet the serious problem of degradation of the environment?

Hon. Alastair Gillespie (Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources): Mr. Speaker, I know work was done on such a project. I believe that work indicated that although such a project might be technically feasible, it would be environmentally damaging.

An hon. Member: But not as damaging as a pipeline.

Mr. Gillespie: In economic terms, it would be very expensive. Although these figures may not be precisely accurate, they show that in order to duplicate the throughput of a pipeline, you would require say a 30 car or 100 car train going by about every 45 minutes. The figures are of that order. Clearly, the economics of the proposals place it on a far less attractive basis than that of the pipeline.

Mr. Diefenbaker: Mr. Speaker, I have figures which indicate that the proposal would require 20 trains per day, not the number the minister mentioned. Further, I should like the minister to bring his statistics up to date. I am told that consideration is not being given to the proposal because of the cost, but that does not agree at all with the very full investigation made by the group at Queen's University. In that connection, I ask if the higher echelons of the civil service oppose the railroad, and if Mr. Aguin, a top transport department official said two years ago that if pipelines were proven to be ineffective because of the danger to the environment and the like, as was pointed out in the Berger Report, then and only then the question of a railroad would be considered.

I ask the minister whether the government is giving any consideration to a railroad which would provide tremendous employment not only in the production of extra railway facilities but also in continuing work. Why is the minister so definitely set against a course which has been recommended quite widely but which the higher echelons of the civil service apparently oppose. The minister, apparently suffering from the osmosis of their opinions, takes the same view.

Mr. Gillespie: Mr. Speaker, I seek out the best environmental information I can get and the best economic advice I can get. I think if the right hon. member were to reflect for a moment on his figures concerning the number of trains per day which would be needed, he would see that his figures are not inconsistent with mine. Much depends, of course, on how many cars there are in each train. Clearly, he should recognize that trains going by at 60 or 70 miles an hour at least every hour or hour and 20 minutes are likely to pose a greater environmental hazard to the north than a quiet subterranean pipeline. I can reassure the right hon. gentleman that we took seriously those considerations. We looked at them, and they just did not seem to stand up.

Oral Questions

● (1440)

PRIORITY OF UNITED STATES ENERGY NEEDS OVER SETTLEMENT OF NATIVE LAND CLAIMS—MINISTER'S POSITION

Mr. Wally Firth (Northwest Territories): Mr. Speaker, may I direct a question to the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources. In his report, Justice Berger said and I quote:

If we build the pipeline now there is every reason to believe that the history of northern native peoples will proceed along the same lamentable course as that of native people in so many other places.

Since a government decision to override that advice and basically to write off the native people of the north will come largely on the advice of the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources, may I ask the minister whether he now believes that the United States energy interests should take priority over the settlement and implementation of the native claims in the Northwest Territories.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Alastair Gillespie (Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources): Mr. Speaker, with all deference to the hon. member, I think that is an insulting question. Quite clearly the government is so concerned about the kinds of problems about which the hon. member is concerned that they commissioned Mr. Justice Berger to look into the question. There has never been any question in our minds that the Canadian interest, and that includes the interest of all Canadians and in particular the interest of the northern peoples, would come well ahead of any interests of the Americans south of the border.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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NORTHERN AFFAIRS

INQUIRY WHETHER MINISTER AGREES WITH BERGER RECOMMENDATIONS

Mr. Wally Firth (Northwest Territories): I wish to direct my supplementary question to the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development. I would like a yes or no answer. Does the minister agree with the major recommendations of the Berger report?

Hon. Warren Allmand (Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member will get my answer in due course.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

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COMMUNICATIONS

NUMBER OF COMPLAINTS ABOUT BIAS IN CANADIAN BROADCASTING CORPORATION PROGRAMMING

Mr. J. P. Nowlan (Annapolis Valley): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Communications. Since