

evidence and it is certainly not the high ground of decency, which the leader of the NDP sought to pre-empt; it is, instead, their old, blind bias against business and against the United States of America.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Clark: What worries us is that there appears to be an equal bias, on the other side of the question, among ministers of the government. The only minister who has expressed a view on the Berger report said categorically, to quote him, that he was "not in any way in agreement with Berger". The government was given the opportunity to dissociate itself from that view on Wednesday, and expressly refused that opportunity, so we can only assume that the minister spoke for the government when he said he was "not in any way in agreement with Berger". As my colleague points out, not only did they not dissociate themselves from the statement of the minister; as soon as he made the statement they rewarded him with two minutes as Acting Prime Minister of the country.

Mr. MacFarlane: That is closer than you will ever get, Joe.

Mr. Nowlan: They are all actors over there.

Mr. Clark: Without dwelling too long on Acting Prime Ministers, the important point to make here is that the position of the Prime Minister himself is not clear, except that he seems to be bound to the September 1 deadline. He has been threatening Canadians—and I use that word advisedly—that unless we decide by September 1, the United States will decide for us choosing the El Paso route. Two parts of this argument are curious. The first is the insistence upon September 1, when it is well known that the government of the United States has at least three months, back to December 1, to make a decision under its own existing legislation. Since the Prime Minister insists so much upon September 1, the question must arise as to whether there was some secret arrangement between himself and President Carter by which the Prime Minister of Canada gave away three months of time which might normally be available for this country to consider a question of utmost importance to our future.

The second curiosity is that the Prime Minister seems to be giving away, in advance, any capacity, on behalf of Canada, to argue for a delay in the United States timing, if—and I emphasize "if"—the evidence made available to parliament indicates that the Canadian national interest would not be served by American deadlines. We will want to know why the Prime Minister has deliberately chosen this approach which could limit our negotiating power on this question.

Of fundamental importance here is that Canada takes the right decisions on the related questions of an energy corridor, northern development, and the treatment and future of our northern people. The best way to guarantee that the decision will be right is to have it taken in public, in the parliament of Canada. For that reason, this party has consistently sought to have all the evidence brought before a special committee of the House of Commons, a committee to which should be referred

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the Berger report, the National Energy Board report, the Lysyk report on the Alcan route, the Fenco consultant study of the possibility of the cost overruns, and all other information which relates to these decisions.

The government has now been pushed toward a public debate but cavalierly dismisses, as the Acting Prime Minister did the other day, a reference to committee as being simply another inquiry into an inquiry. That misses two points. The first is that each of the previous inquiries, whether the Berger inquiry, the NEB, the Lysyk study, or any other, was into a limited subject, and there is no agency now established to pull together all of the recommendations of all the separate inquiries and consider them together. I should specify that there is no public agency for this purpose. The government has the option, as always, of pulling this work together in secret and making its decision in secret. This is the style of this government. That is no doubt about their intention now, and that is the proposition which we in this party simply will not accept.

It is the job of parliament to make these decisions. Parliament, and only parliament, can make national decisions. Mr. Justice Berger, the National Energy Board, Dean Lysyk, even the Prime Minister himself, do not represent the people of Canada in our system. Parliament is not just another level of study. It is not one more inquiry. It is the only legitimate place for the mapping of the course that we must take in the north, and the only effective way that parliament can gather the information which we need and to have the right to call witnesses and debate the issue in some kind of committee format. Among other advantages, a parliamentary inquiry will provide a responsible public forum—a court of appeal, if you will—to those major groups who disagree seriously with the reports of Mr. Justice Berger, Dean Lysyk, or the National Energy Board. For example, Canadian Arctic Gas, having spent \$140 million in preparing its proposals, should have some public forum in which it can take issue with some of the conclusions of the Berger inquiry. Serious parties who disagree with recommendations Dean Lysyk might make, or with recommendations or calculations that might come from the National Energy Board, also require some public forum to which they can present their evidence so that Canadians will be in possession of all the facts when we take the decision which we must take.

● (1300)

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Clark: There are a number of important questions which flow from the Berger report. One of them has to do with the design changes which might change the feasibility of some of the projects referred to by Mr. Justice Berger. Another talks about the technical uncertainties documented by Mr. Justice Berger relating to frost heave and the possibility of new methods being developed which can deal with that serious problem.

Mr. Justice Berger stressed the potential of scheduling and work delays forcing some construction to take place over the summer months. We need to know whether that is likely to be