

Oral Questions

DELAY IN CONSTRUCTION

Mr. Howard Crosby (Halifax West): I have a supplementary question for the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources. Madam Speaker, the National Energy Program indicated that we on the east coast would receive natural gas through the pipeline system by 1983. This has now been extended two years. Further delays will result in a failure to supply natural gas for even longer periods of time. I do not think the minister's answer is good enough in the context of his promises to the House, and the promises by the Prime Minister in the election campaign.

When will the gas line be constructed? When will we know about this thing? Why are there further delays over the three months the government has already had to consider the matter?

Hon. Marc Lalonde (Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources): Madam Speaker, again the government and myself have been the ones who have pushed for this particular program while the Conservatives were sitting on their hands.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Lalonde: As a matter of fact, the hon. member well knows we had to prevail against the very strong reservations of the Conservative government of New Brunswick about this particular issue. I am very happy now that the government of New Brunswick has come around to support this project.

We have faced some problems with the particular route that has been proposed between Quebec and New Brunswick. We have also faced some objections from the government of Quebec. I have been working very hard in order to resolve those objections so that the project, once it is finally and formally approved, will proceed much faster than the way the hon. member suggested.

So far as the project is concerned, it is one of the top priorities of this government. I am not only confident, but I can tell the hon. member that the project will take place.

Mr. Crosby: When?

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EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

EL SALVADOR—HOLDING OF DEMOCRATIC ELECTIONS

Mr. Bob Ogle (Saskatoon East): My question is directed to the Secretary of State for External Affairs. I should like to ask my question in the light of the discussion that has gone on today about human rights, and I particularly ask the question about the state of El Salvador. In my hand I have a letter that the minister received from the Canadian Council of Churches indicating and asking for a change in policy respecting Canada and El Salvador. I also have here a letter recently released by the Conference of Canadian Catholic Bishops that says "that the military and Christian Democratic ruling junta in El Salvador is responsible before its own nation and before

the international community for extremely grave crimes. It is responsible for the crimes of extermination and genocide carried out against tens of thousands of El Salvadorans in a little over a year." That letter was signed by 33 bishops from Mexico, Central America, and Latin America, and by 210 priests. They praised the Canadian bishops for what they had done so far.

Does the Minister of External Affairs still believe that true representative democratic elections will be possible in El Salvador in March?

An hon. Member: No.

Hon. Mark MacGuigan (Secretary of State for External Affairs): Madam Speaker, our policy on El Salvador has continued to be one of seeking peace through political means and not by military means. We have expressed this policy for months. We believe that the election, which is planned by the present government of El Salvador, will allow the people of El Salvador a democratic choice, if it is conducted in the proper way. We have indicated to that government that we are prepared to support them in every possible way, by observers, through technical assistance, or any other way, to conduct that election campaign in a fully democratic manner. It seems to me, Madam Speaker, that to allow the people of El Salvador themselves to judge the government of El Salvador is really the genuinely democratic way to proceed with a problem of this kind.

RECOGNITION OF POLITICAL MOVEMENT

Mr. Bob Ogle (Saskatoon East): Madam Speaker, at the UPI meeting, an international meeting of parliamentarians in Havana, the Canadian delegation representing all three parties, and also the Chairman of the Standing Committee on External Affairs and National Defence, voted as a group to support the French-Mexican position of accepting the fact that the FDR is a legitimate, political force that must be dealt with. Will the minister tell this House whether or not the government is ready to move in that same direction?

Hon. Mark MacGuigan (Secretary of State for External Affairs): Madam Speaker, that initiative is largely discredited at this point. Certainly it is not one which we propose to join. I would say to the hon. member, Madam Speaker, that we are concerned about the problems of El Salvador, whether they arise from the right or the left. We are not concerned about the problems that arise only from one direction. We believe that the best solution is to allow the people of El Salvador themselves to decide. I wonder what my hon. friend finds wrong with democracy.