

Mackenzie Valley Pipeline

seems to have been overlooked is that the Berger Commission conducted its own preliminary inquiry before engaging in more detailed investigations. The Lysyk Commission will not deal in environment or conditions for construction at this time.

Concurrent with this board of inquiry under Dean Lysyk, the environmental assessment and review process of the Department of the Environment will be examining environmental matters, and there will be continuous exchanging of information between the two investigatory bodies.

The Yukon board faces a major challenge in trying to arrive at preliminary findings in a relatively short time. Judge Berger's report suggests, however, that the socio-economic impacts in the southern Yukon may not be as severe as those encountered in the Northwest Territories. In any event, the experience and reports of the Berger inquiry, the first of its kind in Canada, should greatly assist Dean Lysyk and his colleagues in carrying out their assignment.

In concluding, Mr. Speaker, I wish to thank hon. members for the additional time given me, and I assure them and the Indian people of Canada again that while we are voting against this motion we are doing so simply because it is premature.

Mr. Wally Firth (Northwest Territories): Mr. Speaker, the concluding remarks of the minister astound me. I find it rather difficult to accept the argument that he and hon. members who spoke earlier on this motion have made. They say they cannot support the motion. They say that, even after three years of very careful and hard work done by Mr. Justice Berger.

The motion reads as follows:

That this House urges the government to accept the principal recommendation of the Berger Report that no pipeline be built in the Mackenzie Valley for at least ten years.

That is a straightforward motion.

I wish to start out by stating very categorically that I wholeheartedly support the report brought down on Monday by Mr. Justice Berger. It is a totally comprehensive analysis of a most important issue. In its style it is forthright, and therefore I believe that you either have to be for it or against it, and I personally feel that anyone against the recommendations in the report is either fooling himself or, even worse than that, is rather shortsighted.

The magnitude of the proposed Mackenzie Valley pipeline is, to say the least, immense. I say that for several reasons. As Justice Berger points out, this endeavour is the greatest construction project ever contemplated by private enterprise. The impact upon the north, especially the western Arctic, is massive. And, due to the issues involved, the proposed undertaking assumes international importance. Consequently it would be foolhardy to try to minimize any of the matters we are dealing with here.

From the beginning the NDP has pushed for consideration and evaluation of such a proposed undertaking. Indeed it was due to our prodding that the Berger Commission was initially established. We feel that it is absolutely essential that, rather

[Mr. Allmand.]

than push blindly ahead, we should have a clear picture of our energy needs, to determine, in the first place, if and when such activity might be necessary. In addition, we are concerned about the environmental matters, and, most important, the social impact on the northern people, especially the northern native population. It is consideration of these issues which we sought, and now we have the Berger recommendations. It is essential that we proceed with reasoned caution and try to do what is right.

Mr. Justice Berger has come out very strongly against any pipeline in the northern Yukon. The environmental concerns are of utmost importance, and any headlong rush to development and exploitation could cause catastrophic and irreparable damage in that area.

Maybe people in the south, environmental and conservation groups notwithstanding, are more accustomed to pollution and the like, and possibly are a bit more complacent, though this is changing. We in the north, who have historically had a very close relationship with the land, are very much aware of the tenuous state of the relationship. Justice Berger has explained, at great length, the potential dangers to the environment which would result from such an undertaking. It certainly would be difficult to argue with his conclusions as to the environmental impact that could be inherent in such a venture. But there may be those who would be willing to sacrifice the clean waters, the rare wildlife, and unspoiled land, for what they consider more important things. We all well know that it has been done before. However, let us be clear about one thing; if not immediately, then over the long run, we would be doing a grave disservice to this country.

I have no intention of going into great detail on this; but surely we are all aware by now of the often catastrophic and, usually, unforeseen results that have occurred where man has interfered with the balance of nature. And I assure you that there are very fewer areas where nature exists in such a delicate balance as it does in the north. It is a harsh land, with its own unique beauty; but due to the existing conditions, the slightest upset could have far-reaching detrimental effects. I really cannot over-state the importance of this. But this is not the only matter which we must take into consideration. There is even a very bigger concern. It should be no surprise that that concern is the people, especially the people of the north. At this point we must consider seriously the social, cultural and economic importance of such an enterprise as the building of a northern pipeline.

As Mr. Justice Thomas Berger points out, Euro-Canadian society has not taken native culture seriously. At best, its attitude can be described as patronizing. Now I admit that this is changing. It might not be changing as fast as we would like, but it is changing. Certainly people are becoming more aware of the importance of our native cultural heritage. We have seen the damage that has occurred to our way of life since the coming of the white man. It is not overly dramatic to say that the social fabric, especially in the part of the country I represent, has been torn apart. Depression and frustration in trying to cope with—or evade—the white man's lifestyle have