

*Mackenzie Valley Pipeline*

hear the views of parliament. The views of parliament will be clear before any decision is taken.

The hon. member for St. John's West (Mr. Crosbie) made a somewhat similar proposal in the House of Commons on Tuesday of this week when he suggested in a motion:

That the government be instructed to initiate a full debate in this House concerning proposals for the construction of a northern pipeline once all of the relevant consultants, boards, commissions and committees have reported on the matters referred to them in connection therewith, and that no final decision be taken in connection with such matters until after full debate so that the views of members of the House as to what action should be taken in the national interest may be known.

I say "Amen" to that. That is the purpose of this motion. It provides a continuing opportunity for parliament to make its views known as additional information is brought forward before a final decision is taken. It also indicates that the government does not intend to take a decision on this matter until all the relevant information is before us. I cannot understand why the New Democratic Party, regardless of the validity of the point which it puts forward, would ask the House of Commons to take a premature decision.

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. MacEachen:** That is the main objection to the motion put forward. It is premature and, I believe, unfair to the very valuable and historic report that has been brought forward by Mr. Justice Berger. I have read most of the report. I find it extraordinary that a serious political party would ask that we decide on Friday on a report of this enormous significance which was only produced and made available to members of parliament on Monday. On Friday of the same week they ask the government to make a decision on this fundamental matter before it has been considered by the Prime Minister and the cabinet as a whole.

I am sure hon. members, no matter how dutiful they are in terms of their other obligations, have not been able to give to the Berger report the attention it deserves in order to reach a proper decision on a motion of this kind on Friday of the same week. I find it incredible that we should be asked to do that. For the reasons I have stated, we are not supporting the motion. It is premature. It is a prejudgment that is unsuitable in this case.

I cannot understand why the official opposition did not take proper precautions by taking this day for themselves and putting down their own motion, and not putting the House in the ridiculous position that it is in today.

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. MacEachen:** That option was open to the official opposition, because it was apparent to me that once the Berger report was tabled the first moment the NDP had an opportunity to put a motion it would put a motion asking us to accept the main recommendation of the Berger report. The Leader of the Opposition should have stopped them at the pass. He should have prevented them from spearing him in the way they

[Mr. MacEachen.]

are doing through this motion. He could have avoided all that self-inflicted damage that is so apparent today.

**Mr. Clark:** Are you supporting our amendment?

**Mr. MacEachen:** I cannot say anything about the amendment that has been moved by the official opposition, because it is not before the House. It exists in some ethereal, procedural oblivion of never-never land.

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. MacEachen:** If it is ever put before the House—and I cannot see that it has any possibility of existing, from the procedural objections that have been raised by the Leader of the Opposition—we will take a position on it. However, we are not ready to take a position on this ethereal image that is temporarily dazzling the members of the opposition.

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Gérard Laprise (Abitibi):** Mr. Speaker, for a few minutes I should like to discuss the motion introduced today by the New Democratic Party concerning the inquiry report and the proposal by Mr. Justice Thomas Berger. It is obvious that the matter of building a pipeline in the Mackenzie Valley for the movement of natural gas or oil is of the utmost importance.

And the representative of the New Democratic Party was undoubtedly well inspired today in introducing such a motion. I do not mean that I agree entirely with the motion but I think the subject deserves consideration. However, without prejudging the decision to be made on the official opposition's proposed amendment to the NDP motion, I find it quite unreasonable that this method should be used during those allotted opposition days and that an attempt should be made to use the day of another opposition party to change almost entirely the subject matter to be discussed.

Mr. Speaker, even if the procedure allows it and there are precedents in that respect I think this habit should be discontinued to allow opposition parties to choose themselves the subject matter to be discussed—that is a thing for them to decide. For those reasons I think the amendment proposed by the Progressive Conservative Party, which by the way is quite incomplete, should not be accepted because if I wanted to be smart I could myself move a sub-amendment to their amendment.

I note that Justice Berger's inquiry required at least three years; he took three years to tour a vast spread of land to consult the natives, the white people living there, the companies involved in exploration or development, to determine the advantages and disadvantages of constructing a pipeline. And now, Mr. Speaker, the Progressive Conservative Party is asking us to appoint a committee to look into the inquiry that lasted three years. That committee could take three, five or ten years to look into Justice Berger's inquiry. No deadline is set.