

jurisdiction of offshore oil. I would ask the Prime Minister whether it is still the position of his government to refer this matter to the Supreme Court of Canada and, if so, when will such reference be made?

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Madam Speaker, I cannot speak on the statements of the Newfoundland minister, but this government has made very clear what our position was, and is. It is twofold: it is that if proprietary rights have to be decided, they should be decided by the Supreme Court of Canada and not by any unilateral action either of the provincial government or of the federal government.

I think the hon. member would agree with that, that only the Supreme Court of Canada can decide, in the final instance, what the constitution says about ownership offshore. I regret, in that regard, that we have not been able to get from the province of British Columbia consent to a joint—

An hon. Member: Newfoundland.

Mr. Trudeau: Newfoundland, consent to a joint—

An hon. Member: It is on the other coast.

Mr. Clark: There are three coasts, the Atlantic, the Pacific, and the Arctic.

Mr. Trudeau: I know, Mr. Clark, but I don't lose my luggage when I go to one coast.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

An hon. Member: What about John Munro?

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

An hon. Member: You lost B.C., and you lost a minister.

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Trudeau: Madam Speaker, as to the second part of our policy, it is to state again to Newfoundland what we have stated many times before, that if it wants to set aside the question of ownership and work out an administrative arrangement which will be advantageous to the province in money terms and in administrative terms, it just has to look at the agreement that was signed a few years ago by the three maritime provinces.

We are prepared to set aside any discussion of ownership to reach an agreement which would be advantageous to the people of Newfoundland in money and in administrative terms.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McGrath: Madam Speaker, the Prime Minister knows that the agreement with the maritimes is not acceptable to Newfoundland. The Newfoundland government has also indicated that if this matter is not resolved to its satisfaction, even if it is referred to the Supreme Court during that period,

Oral Questions

it is prepared to use the powers it already has to hold up production of the very important Hibernia well which is now commercially viable.

My question to the Prime Minister is: In view of the fact that the Newfoundland government indicated in a statement this week that it is prepared to negotiate, and in view of the position it has taken regarding its difference of opinion with the federal government—that is, to hold up production if there is not settlement—is the Prime Minister and is the Government of Canada prepared to accept the good will expressed by the Newfoundland government and immediately sit down and negotiate?

Mr. Trudeau: Madam Speaker, would the hon. member mind clarifying his statement about holding up production? I did not understand what that reference was.

Mr. McGrath: Yes, Madam Speaker, I would be glad to. I am referring to a statement made on Monday by the minister of energy and mines for the province of Newfoundland, in which he stated that the Newfoundland government was prepared to use the powers it already has to hold up commercial production of the Hibernia well until this matter—that is, the dispute with this government—is resolved to its satisfaction.

I say that is a very important new development. In view of that very important new development, and in view of the importance of the potential of the Hibernia well to eastern Canada, will the Prime Minister at least order his Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources to immediately sit down and negotiate with the Newfoundland government?

Mr. Trudeau: Madam Speaker, it does not seem to me that the context quoted by the hon. member is very conducive to fruitful negotiations. If the minister of the Newfoundland government is stating that unilaterally they will take measures to hold up production of something over which their ownership is not established, I would hope that the minister of Newfoundland would reconsider his position.

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● (1500)

NUCLEAR ENERGY

NATIONAL INQUIRY INTO DOMESTIC AND INTERNATIONAL POLICY—GOVERNMENT POSITION

Hon. Ray Hnatyshyn (Saskatoon West): Madam Speaker, I had a question for the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources, but I see he is not present; therefore, I would like to direct it to the Prime Minister.

Our government initiated a national inquiry into domestic and international nuclear policy in Canada. Is it the intention of the Prime Minister to reconvene that national inquiry so that Canadians may have an input and there can be an assessment with respect to the direction of our national nuclear policy?