

Oral Questions

United States counterpart which would protect Canadian interests. That is one word which was left out. Are there no guarantees in that agreement?

Hon. Allan J. MacEachen (Deputy Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, one of the terms of the agreement deals with the common objective of both countries to optimize industrial benefits. As the hon. member is aware, that is an assurance which can be carried forward through the operation of the agreement itself, and through the monitoring of the National Energy Board. Possibly it will be provided for in legislation which will come before the House, if necessary.

Mr. Alexander: Mr. Speaker, it appears the minister has answered my question unknowingly. My conclusion is that there are no guarantees within that agreement which would protect Canadian interests. We have heard that possibly we will be assured some content, and this and that will be optimized. During the time of negotiations, did the minister bring up the question of guarantees and/or preferential treatment with his American counterparts? I have information which indicates that the minister brought this up. If so, what were the answers given?

Mr. MacEachen: Mr. Speaker, I am surprised the hon. member seems to be advocating that we ought to have entered into an agreement with the United States guaranteeing markets, regardless of the price put forward by Canadian industry, when we were assured Canadian industry was fully competitive and all that was required was a provision which would preclude unfair competitive practices. I know perfectly well that the steel industry is rather satisfied, as is industry generally, with the results of the pipeline negotiations.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Alexander: Mr. Speaker, I do not need a lecture from the minister. I am asking him a very simple question. I am trying to find out whether he acted responsibly when he entered into the negotiations to bring about this agreement. Did the thought cross his mind that he should put before his American counterparts the concern we have in this country in terms of guarantees or preferential treatment? I am not saying they will both work. All I want to know is: did the minister have enough common sense to ask those questions, and what were the answers?

Mr. MacEachen: Mr. Speaker, I can assure the hon. member that in the negotiations between the officials of the two governments, Secretary Shlesinger and myself, the question of optimizing and maximizing Canadian industrial benefits were discussed. The concerns raised by the hon. member were considered. They were enshrined in the agreement which has been signed by both governments. I want to relieve the anxiety of the hon. member by telling him that he can be assured Canadian industry will participate fully in this rather immense energy project.

Mr. Alexander: I am more anxious than that.

[Mr. Alexander.]

LABOUR CONDITIONS**LOCKOUT OF BRITISH COLUMBIA TELEPHONE EMPLOYEES—
GOVERNMENT ACTION**

Mr. Stuart Leggatt (New Westminster): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Labour. It concerns the lockout of some 10,000 B. C. Tel workers in British Columbia during the past week. In that particular dispute, which is within the minister's jurisdiction, the report of the sole arbitrator, Dr. Noel Hall, was accepted completely by the union. The only matter which remains unresolved is the question of contracting out the companies attempting to remove a clause in the old contract. The result has been a fairly bitter dispute between the B. C. Tel workers and the company. Can the minister advise the House as to what he has done in order to resolve that dispute? Can he also advise why he has not as yet appointed an industrial inquiry commissioner under the Canada Labour Act?

Hon. John C. Munro (Minister of Labour): Mr. Speaker, dealing with the latter part of the hon. member's question first, it is not appropriate to appoint an industrial inquiry commissioner when there is a strike. That is not part of the dispute settlement process. It will not assist in getting an early settlement.

The hon. member is quite right. Dr. Noel Hall recommended a formula for settlement which was rejected by the company and accepted by the union. The union has used its right legally to indulge in a strike. My officers in Vancouver have indicated that they are available to both sides to mediate, which is the role required now, in an effort to effect a settlement. Both parties are aware that our officers are there and are experienced. Those officers can assist if the parties concerned want that assistance. If the officers are not wanted, they will not be of much assistance. I hope that assistance will be sought as soon as possible.

Mr. Leggatt: Mr. Speaker, given the fact that in this case the union has offered to settle the one matter in dispute, which is the contracting out provision by setting out over an 18 month period a study of that particular clause to determine what is in dispute; and given the fact that up to now the company has continued to reject even the idea of a study of the clause contained in the old contract, can the minister advise whether he has interceded with the company in terms of its local management or in terms of the owners of the company who happen to reside in New York under General Tel & Tel?

● (1452)

Has he interceded at either level to find out why this dispute is continuing over such a minor section of the old contract?

Mr. Munro (Hamilton East): The company is well aware of my reaction and that of my department to Dr. Noel Hall. We studied the report and we thought it was fair. We urged the company to accept it. They did not accept it. They advanced their reasons for not doing so, but that did not change our opinion with respect to what we perceived to be a fair and