

Northern Ontario Pipe Line Corporation

How are they going to repay this money and complete their financing by next March, when the Minister of Trade and Commerce and everybody else tells us that the federal power commission certainly will not have given approval by that time? What was the Minister of Trade and Commerce really driving at? If the statement means anything, it means that nobody can count on what the government says.

We do not know whether there will be a further extension. Certainly on the basis of the past record that would be likely, but on the other hand hon. members opposite indicated that they had some inside knowledge about the statement in regard to public ownership. Members opposite obviously thought they knew what those words meant. If that is the purpose let it be declared openly and frankly in this house, and not kept for the secret information of any private members. May we hope that this government with all the tortuous twistings that have taken place will not try to do by indirection what it is unwilling and afraid to do by direction.

While Trans-Canada may not know what is going to happen one thing is certain, that members opposite and all members of this house do not know either. At each point Trans-Canada's rights have been extended, and perhaps that may happen again. It should be remembered, of course—and may I emphasize this—that if those rights are extended next March and they have not been able to repay the money, then the crown company will not have the money to build the northern Ontario section next year. This blocks the northern Ontario section. In this case the government is embarking on something wholly unrelated to the northern Ontario bridge. It is committing the taxpayers of Canada to an arrangement which is exclusively to the advantage of investors in the United States.

What nettle was the Minister of Trade and Commerce speaking about? Was it the hopeless confusion into which he has plunged this whole operation? Quite apart from some explanation of the particular meaning of the word, I think many of us would be interested in knowing who suggested that literary allusion. Since this was so unlike the ordinary statements of the Minister of Trade and Commerce perhaps it would be well to recall where the words come from. Shakespeare did use them first, not the Minister of Trade and Commerce. What were the words that Shakespeare used? He said:

—but I tell you, my lord fool, out of this nettle, danger, we pluck this flower, safety.

Those words might well have come from the Minister of Trade and Commerce. Undoubtedly the safety to which he was referring

was political safety. He was making it quite clear that this was a political manoeuvre and that he was hoping to be able to wrangle it in that way.

Once again even at this late stage I urge the Prime Minister to refer this matter to a committee. There is no measure that has come before this house that has had even a small fraction of the importance of this measure that has not been referred to a committee of the house for examination. That is the regular practice; that is parliamentary procedure. I ask the Prime Minister to refer this whole subject to the committee on railways, canals and telegraph lines, or to a select committee if he prefers that. Of course the standing committee would be able to operate immediately.

Once again I urge the Prime Minister to refer this to an appropriate committee. I ask him what reasonable explanation there can be for not following this proper course. I would point out to him that there are other vital and important reasons why this committee should have the right to inquire. We have had the statement made that this gas is being sold more cheaply to United States consumers. That may be right or wrong; we do not know, and there is no hon. member opposite who knows any more than we do. But a committee of inquiry would give us the facts. Besides, the statement has been made that the Canadian taxpayers are going to be mulcted to the extent of more than \$2 million a year by a deal which is in favour of the United States consumers. Let us have this before a committee where the facts may be obtained.

Above all I ask the Prime Minister tomorrow to tell us his position in regard to the whole affair. Above all I urge that this should not proceed in its present form. This is a vital resource. Gas is a vital part of our national development. We want the pipe line constructed just as soon as possible. We have been urging its construction for five years. We want action taken that will produce positive results, under some coherent plan. We do not want Canadian taxpayers' money to be used in this way to finance United States interests and to give control of Canadian resources in this manner.

In simple terms this government now proposes to put up 90 per cent of the cost of the construction of the pipe line, all Canadian taxpayers' money, for the purpose of handing over this whole operation to a corporation which is 83 per cent owned in the United States.

Just before the six o'clock recess I was referring to certain comments that had been made in this house. Time elapsed then, and