

recommendations put forward by the National Energy Board but it cannot substitute recommendations of its own. In other words, we have a double veto with respect to pipeline construction. No pipeline can be built unless there is an affirmative decision both by the National Energy Board and the government on the basis of the board's recommendation. I would go further and say that in this context there is a triple veto, that of the National Energy Board, the government and parliament.

An hon. Member: Coming from you, that is revolutionary.

Mr. MacEachen: I emphasize this point in order to underline that as matters now stand, a decision to have no pipeline is still an option for Canada. The assumption underlying the discussion is that this is not an alternative in principle. I say it is still an alternative. A decision to have no pipeline is still an option for this country. The El Paso alternative means that this need not impede United States access to Prudhoe Bay gas. As hon. members are no doubt aware, construction of an overland route across Canada has advantages for Canada in terms of earlier and more economic access to northern gas and in terms of economic activity generated in Canada by such a project. It would be foolish, therefore, for Canada not to study all factors in play within the time-frame available, that is, before the United States must decide on the El Paso route or an overland route.

Mr. Clark: When is that?

Mr. MacEachen: That is why I welcome the Leader of the Opposition joining the government today, somewhat belatedly, in suggesting that all relevant reports must be taken into account—

Mr. Clark: By a committee or parliament.

Mr. MacEachen:—before a decision is taken. I was under the impression, probably it was wrong, that the press had reported him on Tuesday as already having endorsed the main recommendations of the Berger report.

Mr. Goodale: He did.

Mr. MacEachen: I do not debate whether that change in opinion has occurred. It is important that the Leader of the Opposition has said today that no decision on this important question ought to be taken until all the evidence is in.

Mr. Woolliams: Right on.

Mr. MacEachen: That is an extremely sound position which I have been arguing on behalf of the government ever since the Berger report has been produced. Of course, the NDP is obscurantist in the extreme. They seem to be able to make up their minds without hearing any evidence at all. They have, again, put on the order paper a motion which is totally premature and, to some extent, unfair to Mr. Justice Berger. I say that because even if this motion is turned down an inference could be drawn that in some way the House of

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Commons is unsympathetic to the valuable work Mr. Justice Berger has done. I believe it is somewhat unfair to ask the House of Commons in a clear-cut decision to reject or accept a particular recommendation made by Mr. Justice Berger—

Mr. Clark: You had better accept our amendment.

Mr. MacEachen:—the validity of which can only be considered in terms of other relevant evidence which must be brought forward at a later date. Therefore, as a move to advance the national interest, the motion moved today by the New Democratic Party cannot be taken seriously for reasons already stated and to be stated in the course of the debate. In our view, Mr. Speaker, it would be most unwise to reach a decision until all the available information is in hand.

Mr. Baldwin: Then why did Pierre make a promise to President Carter?

Mr. MacEachen: I would not wish, and I am sure most hon. members of the House would not wish, to reject a possible National Energy Board recommendation before it is submitted, any more than I would have wished to have taken a decision on pipelines in the absence of Mr. Justice Berger's recommendations. Today we are being asked to reject in advance a decision which may be submitted by the National Energy Board.

Mr. Paproski: You had better support our amendment, Allan.

Mr. MacEachen: Prudent decision-making requires a timely choice amongst available options upon the basis of all available information. In the present case there are elements not yet available to the government, and we therefore will not be rushed into a decision until the National Energy Board's recommendations, Mr. Justice Berger's second volume, and Dean Lysyk's report and the environmental assessment on the Alaska route are available. Equally, Mr. Speaker, we do not intend to postpone a decision when the information is before us, since as is so often the case in this world an absence of a decision in itself is some kind of decision.

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If we do not want a pipeline across Canada, we are free to turn it down, but I see no advantage in eliminating an overland pipeline option because we are unable to make up our mind or make it up on the basis of incomplete information. That is the basic position of the government. That is why I put on the order paper a motion which was referred to earlier by the hon. member for Oshawa-Whitby (Mr. Broadbent).

I did it for two purposes, basically. One is to provide a continuing opportunity for parliament, by calling this motion, to make its views known as the situation develops. If today our debate is not regarded as sufficient on the Berger report, I am prepared to recall the motion that I have put on the order paper at a later date and have a further debate, as I am prepared to call it later after the National Energy Board report is delivered so that we can have a further opportunity to