

tary secretaries to address questions to cabinet ministers. I notice that we are again reverting to that habit.

**Some hon. Members:** Oh, oh!

**Mr. Speaker:** That point has been raised before and I have commented on it before. If the hon. member would refer to earlier statements I have made he would find I have never indicated that parliamentary secretaries should not ask questions.

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

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### REGIONAL ECONOMIC EXPANSION

#### NORTHERN ONTARIO—JOINT ACTION WITH PROVINCE TO FORMULATE CO-ORDINATED DEVELOPMENT PLAN

**Mr. Cyril Symes (Sault Ste. Marie):** Mr. Speaker, in the absence of the Minister of Regional Economic Expansion I address my question to his parliamentary secretary or to the Prime Minister. In view of the fact the Ontario government has recognized the need for special economic programs to assist northern Ontario, can the hon. gentleman inform the House what action his department has taken in conjunction with the province to formulate a co-ordinated plan of development for northern Ontario?

[Translation]

**Mr. Marcel Prud'homme (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Regional Economic Expansion):** Mr. Speaker, I was absent-minded for a moment and I would greatly appreciate it if the hon. member would repeat the beginning of his question.

[English]

**Mr. Symes:** With the situation in northern Ontario it is obvious that not only the parliamentary secretary but also the department is dozing. In view of the fact that the Ontario government has recognized the need for special economic programs to assist northern Ontario, can the parliamentary secretary inform the House what action the department has taken in conjunction with the province to formulate a co-ordinated plan of development for northern Ontario?

[Translation]

**Mr. Prud'homme:** Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Regional Economic Expansion has met with the provincial premiers and held extensive conversations on the co-ordination which should exist between the federal department and the various provincial governments; the policy on this is being elaborated. On the other hand, I must recognize that, when he appeared before the committee, the minister dwelt at great length on what ought to be accomplished in northern Ontario. The hon. member should know that, if there have been problems in the past, they resulted mostly from lack of interest on the part of the Ontario government which, for many years, had neglected the northern area.

[English]

**Mr. Symes:** I have a supplementary question for the Prime Minister. Bearing in mind a confidential DREE

### Oral Questions

report which I released to the House last Thursday, stating that 6,000 jobs may become redundant in northern Ontario within the next two or three years, what immediate steps will the Prime Minister take to see that such an economic upheaval does not occur?

**Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister):** There is little I can add to what the parliamentary secretary has just said, except to say that there is to be a meeting with the responsible minister of the Ontario government, Mr. White, I believe, within a week.

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### ENERGY

#### NATURE OF DISCUSSIONS BY MINISTER WITH VISITING UNITED STATES SENATORS AND OFFICIALS—INQUIRY AS TO AGREEMENT ON GAS PIPELINE CONSTRUCTION

**Mr. Eldon M. Woolliams (Calgary North):** Mr. Speaker, I should like to address a question to the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources arising from the fact that a number of United States senators and officials were in Ottawa over the weekend, apparently making inquiries about the federal government's position with reference to energy. Did the minister hold any discussions with these people?

**Hon. Donald S. Macdonald (Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources):** Yes, Sir.

**Mr. Woolliams:** If I understood the minister's shotgun answer, he said "Yes, Sir". Are you now in a position to tell the House of Commons—

**Some hon. Members:** Order!

**Mr. Woolliams:**—through you, Mr. Speaker—the nature of your discussions with regard to this subject which is so important to the country, particularly to western Canada?

**Mr. Macdonald (Rosedale):** Yes, Sir. We discussed, among other things, the possibility of the Mackenzie Valley route for a pipeline from Prudhoe Bay to the United States markets. I indicated, as I have told the House on a number of occasions, that the government was prepared to consider a Mackenzie Valley route as an alternative to the Alyeska proposal as one way of protecting the west coast of Canada from the tanker risk.

**Mr. Woolliams:** Would the minister go as far as to tell the House and the country whether an agreement was reached between the United States and Canada on the construction of a pipeline to transport natural gas and, eventually, petroleum crude?

**Mr. Macdonald (Rosedale):** No, Sir. There was no agreement. They were not here to seek agreement; they were here to discuss some of the issues involved in the alternatives for bringing Arctic reserves to the market.