

Oral Questions

try. Can the minister tell the House what proportion of the program that will be announced will be earmarked for the province of Quebec?

Hon. Marc Lalonde (Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to answer the question of the hon. member. In his budget speech last night, the Minister of Finance stressed what major expenditures the government plans for various parts of the country. He mentioned, in particular, the Atlantic region and western Canada, but the budget in no way overlooks central Canada, whether it be Quebec or Ontario.

To answer the question of the hon. member, I should like to point out that the new initiatives alone under the energy program of the Canadian government for the next three years will represent expenditures of some \$1.8 billion in the sole province of Quebec. That, of course, does not include the possibility of building an oil upgrading plant in the refineries of east Montreal, which could represent outlays of over \$1 billion, nor the construction of a regasifying plant at Gros Cacouna, if the Arctic project materializes and if the National Energy Board and Petro-Canada choose that site as being the best.

[English]

EFFECT OF BUDGET ON OIL INDUSTRY

Mr. John Thomson (Calgary South): Madam Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources. I am sure the minister is aware that substantial amounts of capital from the oil industry have been moving to the United States, as well as people and drilling equipment. Has the minister made an assessment of what further losses of this nature can be expected as a result of the budget proposals?

Hon. Marc Lalonde (Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources): Madam Speaker, I have not had the latest report on the stock market, but by eleven o'clock this morning I was told Canadian stocks were holding very well and that some decrease had taken place in the value of the shares of multinationals, although those decreases appeared at that time to be rather small. I think it shows that the business community has indeed examined this budget and found that it was a fair and good budget.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Lalonde: I have no doubt in my mind that the proposals contained in the budget will reinforce the role, participation and activities of Canadian firms in the oil and gas industry. This is fundamental to our objective, and I am quite confident that the budget tabled last night will achieve that objective, together with our national energy program.

Mr. Thomson: Madam Speaker, I did not think I had asked the minister about the stock market performance today. I asked him if he had made an assessment of what we can expect by way of the loss of capital, people and equipment as a result

of the budget proposals. If the minister is so convinced that this will be to the benefit of that element of the oil industry, will he undertake to have the Petroleum Monitoring Agency assess over the next coming months the loss of Canadian capital, Canadian expertise and Canadian oil well drilling companies, and what effect these losses will have in terms of attaining the government's stated goal of self-sufficiency?

● (1450)

Mr. Lalonde: Madam Speaker, we on this side of the House will not subscribe to the gloom and doom predictions of the hon. member or his colleagues on that side. As far as we are concerned, the energy program which has been put forward is one that is good for the industry, good for the producing provinces, good for the consumer and fair to all regions. I am confident that the people of Canada will judge it so.

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NORTHERN PIPELINES

EXTENSION OF NATURAL GAS PIPELINE TO MARITIMES

Mr. Howard Crosby (Halifax West): Madam Speaker, I have a question for the Prime Minister who is about to leave the House. I hope he will remain. It concerns the extension of the natural gas pipeline to the maritimes. The Prime Minister said in January, 1980, in Halifax that immediate action would be taken to ensure the construction of a natural gas pipeline if he were elected. The government stated in the Speech from the Throne that it favours the earliest possible construction of a natural gas pipeline. The Deputy Prime Minister said in Halifax that the government was committed to extending the pipeline. And the budget speech last night said that the pipeline extension was a national priority.

The Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources knows that extension of the gas pipeline is subject to the approval of the National Energy Board.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. Would the hon. member please put his question right now.

Mr. Crosby: I will put my question, Madam Speaker. Is the Prime Minister and his government committed to commencing construction of the natural gas pipeline eastward, or is this matter subject to the approval of the National Energy Board? Who is running this country, the government or the National Energy Board?

Hon. Marc Lalonde (Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources): Madam Speaker, the Minister of Finance announced last night that in the budget the sum of \$500 million had been set aside for the extension of the pipeline through Quebec and the maritimes and, if necessary, to help in the construction of a pipeline to Vancouver Island. This money has been committed by the government and by the Minister of Finance in his budget for this particular purpose, and he declared that the construction of the pipeline to the maritimes was a national priority.