

Oral Questions

Mr. Trudeau: In so far as that is concerned, the hon. member is correct. I do not believe he is correct when he suggests that in some way the United States government undertook to build the line. He is correct in indicating that it was a priority for the Americans back in President Carter's time. We were begged—indeed, implored—to pass special legislation quickly because the Americans wanted that pipeline to be built, but I do not recall that in any of those circumstances the United States administration undertook to finance or to build the pipeline itself. It was something that was in the hands of the private sector both in Canada and in the United States.

● (1430)

I have discussed this matter with the President of the United States and I hope to seek occasions to do that again.

An hon. Member: They won't let you into the country.

Mr. Trudeau: I plan to meet the President in another country, Madam Speaker, but I am not sure if the hon. member who interjected would be allowed into that country.

I think the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources has dealt with the matter. We have an undertaking from successive United States administrations that the pipeline was a priority. We still take it to be their priority.

I understand there are supplementary questions, Madam Speaker.

POSITION OF EXXON CORPORATION

Hon. Erik Nielsen (Yukon): Madam Speaker, my supplementary question is directed to the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources. The minister will recall that the Reagan administration removed the prohibition against multinationals assuming an equity position in this project, leaving it open now for them to do so. Will the minister inform us whether there is any validity or substance to the suggestion that Exxon will now replace the American component, Northwest Alaska Pipeline Company, in holding the equity position that is available to Northwest Alaska Pipeline Company now?

Hon. Marc Lalonde (Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources): Madam Speaker, the hon. member is right in suggesting that there had been some difficulties among the producers with regard to the distributors. That was the subject of discussion in the last couple of weeks. However, I do not have specific information as to what specific plans there are in regard to Exxon and its share in the project. I have not been informed of any specific proposal in that particular regard.

EFFECT OF INTERNATIONAL AGREEMENT ON DEMPSTER LATERAL LINK

Hon. Erik Nielsen (Yukon): Madam Speaker, I wonder if the minister would undertake to inform himself on that subject and either reply in the House or inform me accordingly.

In view of his ironclad hopes that the whole line will be proceeded with, will the minister please advise us whether, in

his view, the Dempster lateral will be proceeded with as the international agreement which forms part of the legislation, calls for?

Hon. Marc Lalonde (Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources): Madam Speaker, I will be pleased to inquire and transmit to my hon. friend the information that can be made available to me at the present time. I would remind him, however, that some of that information may be considered confidential between the partners and I might not have access to it. I will be very happy to communicate to him anything I can get.

As far as the Dempster extension is concerned, if I remember the agreement with the United States, it provided for the possibility of tying the Dempster line to the Alaska gas pipeline. There was not an obligation to build that line and it was a right that Canada had, and would continue to have if the project proceeds as we hope.

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PUBLIC WORKS

CONTRACT FOR DESIGN OF CANADIAN EMBASSY IN WASHINGTON D.C.

Hon. John C. Crosbie (St. John's West): Madam Speaker, my question is directed to the Prime Minister. His office announced on February 25 that Mr. Arthur Erickson and his firm had been awarded the contract to design the new Canadian embassy in a very prestigious area of Washington. This was after a special selection committee of seven civil servants and architects had invited submissions. In response, 318 people made requests and 71 put in detailed submissions. Four firms were recommended for that \$30 million job, none of which was the Erickson firm.

Why did the government select the Erickson firm—Mr. Erickson is reputed to be a friend of the Prime Minister—when the selection committee had recommended four other firms and had ranked them in order of selection after the architectural firms involved had spent hundreds of thousands of dollars in making their submissions? Why was the request of the committee and its recommendations ignored and the Prime Minister's friend appointed? Should they not just have said, "Only Trudeau friends need apply?"

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Madam Speaker, I took the view that there were 11 finalists and that they were persons or firms which obviously had been assessed as competent to be considered by the selection process for building the embassy. I thought it was correct for the federal cabinet to choose from among that 11 the one that we wanted to ask to make a proposal for that embassy.

I have taken the view, and I admit it is somewhat a change of policy, that the final decision should be made by the elected representatives of the people and that, within a small number