

Mackenzie Valley Pipeline

crime. We would have committed this crime without the slightest practical justification. It is essential that we affirm now our commitment to justice and practicality for all the people of Canada by supporting Mr. Justice Berger's recommendation that no pipeline be built in the MacKenzie Valley for ten years so that the land claims may not only be settled in principle but implemented in detail.

Mr. Justice Berger's report has meant for many that the spotlight is now on the Alcan proposal to bring Alaskan gas through Canada to the United States along the Alaskan Highway. I want to say something about that proposal. The view of the New Democratic Party is now, as it has been for more than a year since we stated this position in a brief to Mr. Justice Berger, that the most desirable of all the pipeline proposals put forward for northern gas development is unquestionably the Alcan proposal.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Broadbent: Is it at this point totally acceptable? I want to not only ask the question, but answer it. Clearly, more work and some changes are required. In our view, it has received insufficient study. If full assessment shows that the Alcan pipeline can be built with acceptable levels of social and environmental impact, and assuming that the native land claims are settled before construction, with one major change we as a party would favour precisely this kind of pipeline. The major change required is financing. Since this pipeline would be used to ship United States gas to United States markets, surely it is reasonable to require that such a pipeline will be financed by the Americans themselves.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Broadbent: I have not the slightest doubt that our friends in the United States would share that view. If they want to get their gas from the northern part of the country to the south, as they do—and it is understandable, desirable and acceptable to us—the vast majority of Americans would consider it entirely reasonable that that project be financed by the Americans themselves and not put as a financial burden upon Canadians.

I urge the government to respect the process of public inquiry, a process democratized by Mr. Justice Berger, and to extend the deadlines now set for the two inquiries into the Alcan route by a further three months. Mr. Justice Berger's hearings were successful precisely because the communities affected were given sufficient notice to discuss the issues that concerned them before giving evidence. In the Yukon they have been given six weeks' notice and they will have only 36 days of hearings before the decision in principle is scheduled to be made. Only another three months would be sufficient to do a proper job. If the government sticks to its September 1 deadline, the inquiries will merely blink at the questions before them and then write reports. A serious mistake could be made in rushing when we do not need to. In the process, the government will have given notice that it has started to ignore Mr. Justice Berger, because one of the most important aspects

of his inquiry was its respect for proper on-the-spot hearings, hearings affecting people directly affected by the decisions that are made.

Another important aspect of the government's "mulish" adherence to a deadline of September 1 is that parliament would be excluded from the decision. I listened with amazement to the answers given in the House today on this issue by the Acting Prime Minister. He referred to the motion which appears on today's order paper. What does it say? The motion put down by the government House leader dealing with the need for parliamentary decision-making on this question reads as follows:

● (1240)

That this House recognizes the social, economic, environmental and energy issues surrounding the question of northern gas pipelines and believing that the resolution of these issues must reflect the national interest approves the position of the government that all relevant reports must be considered before deciding on a pipeline and its route.

What does this verbiage amount to? Does it amount to giving parliament the right to make a decision? Does it say that the elected representatives of the people of Canada, including those in the north, will have a role to play in the decision-making? It does not. It is a collection of platitudes. It asserts, in effect, that it is the government, the cabinet, which will make the decision after it has looked at the reports. And when will it make a decision? It will make it during the summer months when it knows full well that parliament will be in recess.

Mr. MacEachen: Don't count on it.

Mr. Broadbent: It is a sham motion, and the hon. gentleman knows it. The government's position is that the United States needs to be given an answer before September 1, because legislation in that country places President Carter in the position of having to make a decision by then. However, as the government knows, the real deadline is not September 1 but December 1. The minister is well aware that President Carter can get a 90-day extension beyond September 1 if he wishes. But he has not even requested it. The fact is that the United States will not suffer if there is a three-month delay. As the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources (Mr. Gillespie) noted in the memorandum to which I referred earlier, U.S. energy chief Schlesinger advised that the gas in Prudhoe Bay would be helpful but not really significant in terms of their over-all gas consumption.

Today, in the question period, I pointed out to the Acting Prime Minister that the United States Ambassador to Canada, Mr. Thomas Enders, had stated there was no urgent need for either Canada or the United States to make an early decision. So the government has no excuse for blaming the United States on the grounds that there is a deadline which this country has to meet. The reality is that the government of Canada does not wish to postpone a decision beyond September 1 because it knows that if it did so it would have to face parliament and the prospect of a debate.