

been declining over the past decade. In place of reasonable conservation measures introduced over a period of years, the government was afraid to look at the situation. When it finally realized that it had a crisis on its hands, the government announced drastic measures which hit the sports fishing industry twice as hard as reasonable measures would have done five years ago.

There is a lack of political will in the Department of Fisheries and Oceans. When we look at our government, we see that there is a total lack of political will in terms of standing up to the United States. The United States cancelled the maritime fishing treaty and the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) tries to look at that action in what he calls the best possible light, in a spirit of friendship. But when we are being pushed around by a bully in the guise of a friend, the best possible thing to do is to recognize what is happening and to stand up to it. In a letter to the Prime Minister I asked him if he would raise this issue with President Reagan. I hope that he will.

My question this evening is with respect to what the Department of Fisheries and Oceans, or what any other department of the government, is doing to make sure that we do not have this increased tanker traffic on our coast. What is the government doing to help us meet this threat?

Mr. George Henderson (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Fisheries and Oceans): Mr. Speaker, in response to the hon. member's concerns, it is, first of all, important to point out that this government is very well aware of the potential risks associated with the trans-shipment of hydrocarbons along our coastlines. The Department of Fisheries and Oceans, in particular, has consistently expressed concern about any proposals which would increase the volume of oil shipped along Canada's west coast.

Given this awareness on the part of the government, and in recognition of the need for an objective examination of Trans Mountain's proposal, the National Energy Board has just completed a comprehensive round of public hearings on the question, to which the hon. member has already referred.

In view of these quasi-judicial proceedings by the National Energy Board, I believe the House will appreciate that any statements I make in reply to the hon. member must be of a general nature. Ultimately, the National Energy Board will present its recommendations to cabinet for approval. For this reason it would be improper for the government, or any

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member of the Privy Council, to make public any strong opinion on the proposal now under consideration.

With respect to the statement contained in a publication of the Trans Mountain Pipe Line. Company, asserting that their proposal has attracted support from the Department of Fisheries and Oceans, I can assure the House that the minister responsible for that department has at no time said that he supports the Trans Mountain proposal.

As part of his responsibilities under the federal Fisheries Act for fish habitat protection, the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans (Mr. LeBlanc) has requested and received copies of all plans relevant to the interests of fisheries from Trans Mountain Pipe Line. Departmental specialists are in the process of assessing the project with respect to the potential risk to the fisheries of the west coast and their conclusions will be made available to the company in due course.

I would point out to the hon. member that there are many complex aspects to the proposal submitted by Trans Mountain Pipe Line. The fact that it would increase the volume of oil shipments along the west coast in one that fishermen and the fishing industry continue to view with some apprehension. On the other hand, the company has included a so-called "hook-up" concept in its proposal. This concept would provide a pipeline hook-up to supply crude to Puget Sound refineries, thereby eliminating the need for tanker traffic deep into the sound among the Gulf Islands. This idea may have some merit and it must be carefully assessed before any final conclusions are made. The National Energy Board will be listening to the facts and opinions on all aspects of the proposal prior to making a recommendation to cabinet.

For legal reasons, it is not appropriate for any minister of the Crown to present testimony before the National Energy Board. Accordingly, the Department of Fisheries and Oceans has not presented a formal submission to the board.

Individual specialists from the Department of Fisheries and Oceans were subpoenaed by an intervenor, and they presented expert testimony in their own behalf as private citizens before the board. The public hearings commenced on November 25 in British Columbia; and I understand they came to a conclusion in Ottawa on March 6.

[Translation]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Corbin): Order, please. The motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly, this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at two o'clock p.m.

At 10.30 p.m. the House adjourned, without question put, pursuant to Standing Order.