

ENERGY

REPORTED POSSIBLE WITHDRAWAL OF EAST COAST EXPLORATION BY MOBIL OIL

Hon. John M. Reid (Kenora-Rainy River): Mr. Speaker, my question is addressed to the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources. It concerns a statement that is alleged to have been made by the president of Mobil, one of the oil companies exploring off the east coast, to the effect that he was thinking of withdrawing his company's activities there.

Has the minister been in touch with the president of Mobil, or has Mobil been in touch with the minister, to ascertain what the difficulties are and whether they are thinking of withdrawing from this exploration?

Hon. Ray Hnatyshyn (Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his question. I have only this week had discussions with representatives of Mobil, and that particular intention was not drawn to my attention. I am not aware of any intention on the part of Mobil to withdraw its explorations from offshore-Newfoundland. If the hon. member has any information in his possession to that effect, I would be glad to receive it.

Mr. Reid (Kenora-Rainy River): Mr. Speaker, in that case, I would suggest that the minister might want to go back to Mobil and ask them if there are any questions, dealing particularly with the situation which they now face in terms of the jurisdictional problem.

The difficulty here is that there is jurisdictional ambiguity between now, when the jurisdiction is under the authority of the Government of Canada, and potentially when it will come under the government of Newfoundland. There is a problem here, as I understand it, in terms of "grandfathering" in the obligation which Mobil has taken with respect to the Government of Canada.

Would the minister go back both to Mobil and the government of Newfoundland to ascertain if there are any jurisdictional problems, and with a view to assuring that these ambiguities will be cleared up as swiftly as possible?

Mr. Hnatyshyn: Mr. Speaker, questions relating to regulatory matters and offshore drilling in Newfoundland were discussed between myself and the representatives of Mobil. According to my recollection, they did not indicate that there were any great problems in that regard.

Concerning our relationship with the province of Newfoundland, we intend to carry on in co-ordinating with them the matter of regulatory authorities and the terms of federal and provincial jurisdiction. I am sure that we will be able to carry on in a proper spirit, as we have in the past, with respect to these matters respecting the provinces of Atlantic Canada. Obviously, there will be problems in terms of jurisdiction, but these are matters which can be resolved between us in the spirit of co-ordination and co-operation to which this government is dedicated.

Privilege—Mr. Stollery

● (1210)

Mr. Speaker: I have a notice of a question of privilege from the hon. member for Laurier (Mr. Berger).

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PRIVILEGE

MR. BERGER—DENIAL OF CONFLICT OF INTEREST

Mr. David Berger (Laurier): Mr. Speaker, some questions were raised in this House earlier this week concerning a government lease for a building at 219 Laurier owned by a company that belongs to my family. Some hon. members called for an investigation so that "the people of Canada may be assured it was not in fact political patronage".

I should like to inform this House that our dealings and my involvement in them prior to any thought of becoming a candidate were entirely proper. At the time I became a candidate in March I resigned as an officer and director of this company—of our companies, I should say—and had no further dealings whatsoever with respect to this matter.

I think, if I may say so, that it is outrageous that assertions or insinuations were made in this House and in newspapers without any attempt whatsoever to obtain the facts. I find that I and, more important to me, my father who has led a life of distinguished service to the people of Ottawa, Montreal, Quebec and Canada, have had aspersions cast upon us for no reason. I must say that for a young man entering politics it is not encouraging to be subjected to slurs of this nature. I would wonder how responsible people are going to be attracted to government if they are subjected to treatment of this kind. Do we expect people to live in a vacuum, to have no interests anywhere?

The Minister of Public Works (Mr. Nielsen) has indicated that the matter is currently under inquiry. I should like to say to this House that I welcome this inquiry and indeed I invite him to make his findings public.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. I have received a notice of a question of privilege from the hon. member for Spadina (Mr. Stollery).

MR. STOLLERY—NOTICE OF POSSIBLE QUESTION OF PRIVILEGE

Mr. Peter Stollery (Spadina): Mr. Speaker, at this time I should like to give notice that when I have had the opportunity to look through *Hansard* and examine the reply of the Prime Minister (Mr. Clark) to me today, in which I believe he used unparliamentary language, I should like to reserve my right to bring to you that question at the first available opportunity, presumably on Monday next.

Right Hon. Joe Clark (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, on that request to be given the opportunity to consider a question of privilege, let me simply indicate in advance of any evidence