

Mr. Macdonald (Rosedale): It really is before a committee now, as the hon. member knows as a participant in the National Resources and Public Works Committee. If the committee chooses to elect this particular subject matter under the estimates of my department, I would be prepared to go ahead and have a full discussion of it. It is up to the steering committee to decide on the subject matter with which they would like to deal under this general heading.

CO-ORDINATION OF CANADIAN OPPOSITION TO
PROPOSED WEST COAST OIL TANKER ROUTE THROUGH
JOINT GOVERNMENT COMMITTEE

Mr. John A. Fraser (Vancouver South): Mr. Speaker, I have a supplementary question for the minister. Can he advise the House whether there is now a joint task force or committee of the federal government and the B.C. government instructed to co-ordinate Canadian opposition to the tanker route, and I emphasize the word "now"?

Hon. Donald S. Macdonald (Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources): As I indicated to the House, we immediately requested of Premier Barrett the information and the professional studies upon which he had put forward his Yukon railway proposal, and I sent to British Columbia last week the assistant deputy minister of my department to look further into the preparation that the B.C. government had done prior to this. I might mention to the hon. member who is the environmental critic, that not all environmental critics favour the Mackenzie pipeline route as a means of dealing with the transportation of oil products.

• (1440)

Mr. Fraser: Mr. Speaker, may I ask the minister to again consider what I asked him, and that is whether there is any joint committee? Is there any plan on behalf of the government to set up a joint co-ordinating committee with British Columbia, and has British Columbia been invited in specific terms to join in such a committee, because even the Prime Minister said eight weeks ago that time was of the essence?

Mr. Macdonald (Rosedale): Mr. Speaker, we are dealing here with federal responsibility for the Mackenzie Valley and with a pipeline which in essence will not go through British Columbia at all. I have a little difficulty in understanding why the British Columbia government would be participating in this kind of decision, to be taken under federal law, with regard to a pipeline passing through federal territory. We regard ourselves in this parliament as representing the interests of so far as the west coast is concerned, British Columbia, and it is for that reason I have been active in the past year in presenting this alternative to the United States authorities.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. I note that there are a number of supplementaries on this subject. I am not sure whether the right hon. member for Prince Albert also wishes to ask a supplementary on this matter.

Oral Questions

COMMUNICATIONS

BELL CANADA RATE INCREASES—AUTHORITY OF
GOVERNOR IN COUNCIL IN REGARD TO FINAL DECISION

Right Hon. J. G. Diefenbaker (Prince Albert): Mr. Speaker, my question is supplementary to one asked earlier and concerns a statement by the Prime Minister in connection with what, on the face of it, appears to be an outrageous increase in rates on the part of the Bell Telephone Company. The Prime Minister told the House that, after all, the Canadian Transport Commission is an independent body, set up free for parliament, and so on. Is it not a fact that regardless of how independent it is, the final decision as to whether the increases shall be granted rests with the Governor in Council, the cabinet, which has the power to suspend, postpone, alter, or do away with altogether the recommendations that are made by the commission? Does not the final power rest with the Prime Minister and his cabinet?

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, it seems that the right hon. gentleman is asking for a legal opinion.

Mr. Diefenbaker: Oh, no.

Mr. Trudeau: And if on the face of it the rate increase is so obviously outrageous, I do not see why his party does not condemn it unequivocally.

Mr. Diefenbaker: This is a typical example of the Prime Minister playing with the parliament of Canada.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Diefenbaker: I would be the last to ask him for a legal opinion.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Sharp: Why did you ask, then?

Mr. Diefenbaker: Oh, he even has the support of his Secretary of State for External Affairs. I ask him this question: has not the government of Canada the right under the statute to do that which I suggested a moment ago, or has he not read the statute?

Mr. Trudeau: Mr. Speaker, the right hon. gentleman says that he would be the last to ask me for a legal opinion. He has just asked me for a legal opinion. I can only say that as he is constantly bemoaning that this place is not lively enough I am sure he and I will want to contribute to the liveliness of it.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Diefenbaker: On a question of privilege—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. If the right hon. member is rising on a question of privilege he will be recognized for that purpose. I was under the impression that we were going to deal with supplementaries to the second question. When we have settled the question of privilege the Chair will return to the hon. member for Kootenay West, then