

*Oral Questions***ENERGY**

INQUIRY WHETHER EXPORT TAX WILL BE IMPOSED

Hon. Roch La Salle (Joliette): Madam Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources. In the last two weeks, the minister has been forced to touch upon the subject of an import tax on all forms of energy. I would like to ask the minister—

An hon. Member: Export—

Mr. La Salle:—pardon me, an export tax. I thank my colleagues for the correction. I wonder if under the circumstances, the minister has asked his officials to draft legislation to this effect, and if not, does he intend to do so?

Hon. Marc Lalonde (Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources): Madam Speaker, my officials have not been instructed to draft any type of legislation on the subject. As I have indicated to a great many Canadians, provincial spokesmen, particularly from Saskatchewan and Alberta, have commented that the people of those provinces found unjust that an export tax be imposed on oil and not on other forms of energy, that the issue had not been considered in the context of a full scale review of the energy policy and that the issue would be considered and reviewed. No decision has yet been taken on the matter.

REQUEST PROVINCES BE CONSULTED BEFORE IMPOSITION OF EXPORT TAX

Hon. Roch La Salle (Joliette): Madam Speaker, I should like to ask the responsible minister whether he can assure the House, since those discussions have been held in fact, that no decision to that effect will be reached without it having been negotiated with the provinces or at least without having obtained their agreement to the matter.

Hon. Marc Lalonde (Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources): Madam Speaker, I have already had a number of consultations with all provinces on all sorts of energy questions, and it is quite possible indeed that, before a final decision is made, there might be others. However, I find it strange that the hon. member should suggest that a tax measure which, for instance, would fall strictly within the jurisdiction of the Minister of Finance, should be subject not only to consultations with the provinces but also to their approval. If the hon. member is suggesting that the federal budget prepared by the Minister of Finance should first be approved by the provinces, I feel his conception of the role of the federal government is very strange indeed.

[English]

NORTHERN PIPELINE ACT—PROVISIONS RESPECTING FINANCING OF PIPELINES

Right Hon. Joe Clark (Leader of the Opposition): Madam Speaker, we would be happy if the budget could be approved by the House of Commons, but we have not seen one yet.

My question is addressed to the Prime Minister or to the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources. Can either minister tell us whether the government is considering changing the wording of section 12 of the schedule attached to the Northern Pipeline Act in a way which would change the requirement that financing must be in place for the complete line before approval is granted for the pre-build?

[Translation]

Hon. Marc Lalonde (Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources): Madam Speaker, the right hon. Leader of the Official Opposition is aware of the fact that the National Energy Board already made that recommendation to cabinet and, at the time, it refused to consider it until it had more information on the matter and there were new developments. The recommendation of the National Energy Board is still before cabinet and will obviously be either accepted or rejected.

[English]

Mr. Clark: I wonder, then, if I might have an assurance from either the Minister of Energy or the Prime Minister that any change to the schedule which would have a significant effect upon the conditions would be brought before the House of Commons before it is implemented. In other words, I am asking for an assurance that the government will not use the device of simply amending the schedule as a means of avoiding debate in Parliament on what could be a very important change in policy.

Mr. Lalonde: The right hon. member refers to a "device". I would refer him to the legislation which was passed by Parliament in 1978 and which specifically provided for exactly what he is talking about. In section 20(4) there is a provision enabling the National Energy Board to amend conditions. So there is no question about not respecting Parliament or the will of Parliament. Provision for this has been specifically made in the act, so there is no question of using any special device to avoid Parliament.

Mr. Clark: Madam Speaker, we now have a clear indication that the government is planning to change the conditions by changing the schedule and, consequently, changing the intent of the act which Parliament passed.

What I am seeking is a clear statement from either the minister or his superior in energy matters, the Prime Minister, that a change in the act will not be made by amending the schedule without coming to the House of Commons.

Mr. Lalonde: As usual, the Leader of the Opposition chooses to misinterpret completely what has been stated. No