

Mackenzie Valley Pipeline

have been advanced by the persons who object today, this amendment falls well within the rules of order. It is my respectful submission that it ought to be allowed as one of the questions to be put to this House today for decision.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please. As there does not seem to be any other participant in this procedural debate that I have invited, I would like to thank the hon. member for Grenville-Carleton (Mr. Baker) for trying as hard as he has to enlighten the Chair. I will certainly take his remarks into consideration. Before I reserve my decision, however, I want to say that the latter part of his intervention is not exact, in the sense that the Chair or the House does not prevent him or any other member from moving amendments to motions that are before the House. Any member can do that. The fact that an amendment is not relevant does not mean that the Chair is taking away the right of a member to move an amendment. If an amendment is refused on its procedural acceptability, it is only because it does not correspond to the rules of the House or precedents. The rules of the House are the standard by which we operate and the only standard by which this House can progress. I will reserve my decision until a later time, and at this time I call upon the hon. President of the Privy Council.

Hon. Allan J. MacEachen (Acting Prime Minister): I would like to join hon. members in expressing the appreciation of the government for volume I of Mr. Justice Berger's report. I know of no report submitted to the government which has been more thoroughly prepared and more clearly presented. Mr. Justice Berger has raised basic philosophical questions about the structure and values of Canadian society and the choices to be made in terms of meeting the interests of the Canadian north.

As has been mentioned by the Leader of the Opposition and the hon. member for Oshawa-Whitby, these issues must be addressed not only by the Canadian parliament but by the Canadian people as a whole. These are difficult issues. We all face the difficult problem of reconciling and balancing the needs of the native people both in terms of their traditional way of life and new employment opportunities for those that wish to become involved in Canadian industrial society, as well as our environmental heritage, our energy requirements and more general Canadian economic interests which might be served by so substantial a national enterprise as the construction of the pipeline.

I should like to remind hon. members that we face a timeframe in reaching a decision, but are under no obligation to approve a particular pipeline route or, indeed, any pipeline. Let me explain why. The United States needs Prudhoe Bay gas. We are all aware of the problems faced by the United States economy last winter because of gas shortages. We were able to help out to some degree, but that certainly is no permanent solution. We have our own requirements for gas not at present committed to the export market.

[Mr. Baker (Grenville-Carleton).]

The President of the United States faces a legislative requirement to recommend a pipeline route by September 1, though he does have the power to postpone a decision for 90 days. I would not wish, however, to emphasize the legislative aspect as much as the underlying energy requirement. I think that all members in this House can understand why the United States Congress and administration wish prompt access to the significant quantities of energy available in Prudhoe Bay gas. If the only route for delivering this gas were across Canadian territory, this might present major political difficulties for Canada and, indeed, as some hon. members have suggested, it might appear that we were being pressured or blackmailed. Fortunately, this is not the case.

In their recent recommendations to the President, members of the Federal Power Commission considered a land route across Canada as a preferable means of delivering gas to the lower 48 states, but they were unanimous in their view that the El Paso alternative was a viable and acceptable alternative. As you know, this would involve movement of gas across Alaska, its liquefaction and subsequent shipment by tanker along the Pacific coast to a port in California.

● (1340)

There are possible advantages for Canada in one or the other overland route, and there are also costs and disadvantages. These must be, and are, assessed. It is for this reason that the government has commissioned studies over and above the normal consideration by the National Energy Board. Mr. Justice Berger has looked at the proposed Mackenzie Valley pipeline with regard to social, environmental and economic concerns. We look forward to the second volume of his report which will deal with terms and conditions which might be imposed at such time as a pipeline along the Mackenzie Valley might be constructed, to moderate its socioeconomic and environmental impact.

The government has also commissioned Dean Lysyk to undertake a socioeconomic inquiry on a pipeline route, known as the Alcan route, which would parallel the existing highway system in the southern Yukon, either along the main route of the Alaska Highway or via Dawson, as well as a possible spur to the Mackenzie Delta along the Dempster Highway. A separate environmental assessment panel has been established for this route by the Department of the Environment. The National Energy Board, for its part, has before it applications for the Canadian Arctic Gas route across the northern Yukon and down the Mackenzie Valley, the Foothills Maple Leaf route designed to carry Canadian gas only down the Mackenzie Valley, and the proposed Alaska Highway, Alcan route. The government understands that the board's report will be submitted in July.

Hon. members will recall, particularly those who were in the House when the National Energy Board Act was brought before the House by the then minister of industry, trade and commerce, Mr. Gordon Churchill, as I recall, of the government led by the right hon. member for Prince Albert (Mr. Diefenbaker) that under the act the government can turn down