

tell the hon. member—he is aware, no doubt—that the Government of Canada had already authorized the pre-build of the line, which resulted in several hundred million dollars of work, of orders, and several thousand person years, in terms of the completion of that particular section of the line. It is hoped that the rest will be completed.

Mr. Nielsen: Now it is called “hope” and there are no more ironclad guarantees.

UNITED STATES COMMITMENT

Mr. Ian Deans (Hamilton Mountain): Madam Speaker, I also wish to put a question to the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources. The minister will recall that, in his own words in the House of Commons in 1979, he said quite clearly that an ironclad commitment regarding the building of the whole Alaska gas pipeline would have to be obtained before the pre-build was commenced. Quite obviously, that position was changed considerably.

I want to ask the minister a further question now, in light of the most recent statements coming from Washington, that the United States administration is having considerable difficulty in trying to convince the private sector that they ought to go ahead, and in light of the fact that Mr. Haig has indicated quite clearly that there will be, at the very least, a delay, and that there is a distinct possibility that the project will not proceed. Will the minister tell the House whether he still believes he has an ironclad commitment from the U.S. to build the Alaska gas pipeline, and on which day will Canadians begin to see the benefits he said in the House of Commons would flow to Canadian manufacturers and workers from the building of the Alaska gas pipeline?

• (1425)

Hon. Marc Lalonde (Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources): Madam Speaker, I note that in his statement my hon. friend pointed out that the governments of various countries have some difficulty getting the private sector to do certain things. That seems to be the case with respect to the U.S. administration at the present time.

I remind my hon. friend that the U.S. Congress and the U.S. administration, under the previous President and under the present President, have indicated that the Alaska gas pipeline is a question of the highest priority for the U.S. government. We have no reason to believe this is not still the case. There may indeed be difficulties at the present time between the private partners, but we have no reason to believe there is any less commitment on the part of the U.S. administration to the realization of the project. This is why we have urged that government to make representations and to use its good offices to try to resolve the difficulties which exist at the present time between the private partners in the United States.

Oral Questions

Mr. Deans: Madam Speaker, surely the minister recognizes that the commitment by the U.S. administration means absolutely nothing. There is not one single dollar committed by the U.S. administration to the building of the Alaska gas pipeline.

Mr. Huntington: Tell us about the Mackenzie Valley and land claims settlements.

REQUEST THAT PRIME MINISTER MEET UNITED STATES PRESIDENT

Mr. Ian Deans (Hamilton Mountain): Madam Speaker, my supplementary question is directed to the Prime Minister. U.S. Secretary of State Haig has made it quite clear that this entire matter now rests with the private sector, and there is no guarantee that the private sector will go ahead. Will the Prime Minister arrange to meet and speak with the President of the United States to impress upon him that there was a commitment made by the U.S. that it would build the Alaska gas pipeline if we would proceed with the pre-build? We have lived up to our end of the bargain. When will they live up to theirs?

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Madam Speaker—

Mr. Paproski: Stelco and the people of Hamilton are not going to appreciate what the NDP did.

Mr. Trudeau: Madam Speaker, do the rules allow for members of the opposition to ask each other questions? If so, I will cede to the hon. member for Edmonton North.

Mr. Blackburn: That is just a cop-out.

Mr. Deans: Don't you want to answer? I wish you would.

DEMPSTER LATERAL LINK—REQUEST THAT PRIME MINISTER DISCUSS PROJECT WITH UNITED STATES PRESIDENT

Mr. Ian Deans (Hamilton Mountain): Madam Speaker, let me ask another question of the Prime Minister. Bearing in mind the question I have just asked, does the Prime Minister recognize that without the building of the pipeline we will not be able to provide the Dempster lateral pipeline link and that that will make it extremely difficult and very costly for us to gain access to our northern resources? Part of the deal was that we would be able to gain access to our resources in return for building the pre-build and in return for the Americans living up to their commitment. Will the Prime Minister sit down with the President of the United States, iron out the problem, and require from the President of the United States that he take whatever action is necessary to have his administration fulfil its end of the bargain?

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Madam Speaker, the hon. member is accurate about the Dempster link. It was part of the negotiation that we would leave ourselves open to be able to link Beaufort Sea gas into the pipeline south.

Mr. Nielsen: It was part of the agreement.