

harmony in our country, can the Acting Prime Minister tell the House whether that committee will be asked to meet the authorities of the various provinces to look into the possibility of holding a summit conference that would not be imposed by the federal government but would be agreed upon by the provinces and to which representatives of labour as well as business and finance would be invited in the hope that later on, at some other conference, a new constitution might be proposed that could be acceptable to all Canadians?

[English]

**Hon. Allan J. MacEachen (President of the Privy Council):** I cannot go as far as that in predicting the outcome of the operations of the task force. As the Prime Minister stated yesterday, the primary purpose of the task force is to encourage the efforts of the general public, particularly of non-government organizations, in the field of national unity.

**An hon. Member:** Laughable!

[Translation]

**Mr. Lambert (Bellechasse):** Mr. Speaker, on a supplementary.

In 1970, the government asked a joint committee of the Senate and the House of Commons to study that constitutional problem. That committee reported to the House in March of 1972 and the governments, both federal and provincial have since seen fit not to take into account its recommendations. If the committee announced yesterday which will be asked to study the constitutional problem in our country, hands in an intelligent report, does the government promise to take it into consideration with a view to remedying the situation and restoring the confidence of Canadians so that we can live together in real harmony?

● (1430)

[English]

**Mr. MacEachen:** Mr. Speaker, I doubt whether the task force will operate precisely in the same way as the committee to which my hon. friend refers, which did report on the constitution of Canada. I believe that that report did have some rather important effects on the subsequent thinking of the government and provincial governments as well.

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### ENERGY

DEMPSTER PIPELINE—INQUIRY AS TO ECONOMIC FEASIBILITY AND DATE WHEN NATURAL GAS CAN BE DELIVERED

**Mr. James Gillies (Don Valley):** Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Acting Prime Minister. It arises out of the report of the National Energy Board and the fact that the cabinet must make a very important decision quite soon respecting development of northern resources. I should like to know whether the government will be able to provide to members of parliament before the time of the debate on the pipeline answers to the following questions: (1) Will the

### Oral Questions

Dempster extension be economically feasible? (2) What will be the socio-economic impact of the Dempster pipeline if it is built? (3) Will the government be able to guarantee that Dempster can be finished so that natural gas can be delivered to Canada by 1982? Will we have answers to those three significant questions before we begin the debate on the pipeline in August?

**Hon. Allan J. MacEachen (Acting Prime Minister):** Mr. Speaker, as the Prime Minister indicated yesterday, the government has not yet had an opportunity to consider the National Energy Board report. We have undertaken that a decision will be reached following the presentation of all the reports, and that is likely to take place in the month of August. In the meantime we will make every effort not only to make information available to the House but to make available to the government itself information which will be required in making a reasonable decision. The questions which the hon. member has posed are questions that anticipate certain decisions by the government of Canada. At the present time no decision to build a pipeline or on the site of a pipeline has been taken by the government, but all the information will, of course, be accumulated in order to assist in that decision making process.

**Mr. Gillies:** A supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. Is it the government's position that a decision can be made without answers to the questions I have just posed? In that regard, has the government underway at this moment, since time is so short, studies, a task force or anything which will give us a response to these questions, which I would argue must be answered before the government can make any sort of decision whatever on a pipeline?

**Mr. MacEachen:** Mr. Speaker, I believe the hon. member has made some valid representations which the government will have to consider before it makes a decision, and it will have to assess the type of information required in order to make that decision. But as I said earlier, the government have not yet had an opportunity to discuss these particular points since the NEB report was tabled.

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### ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS

POSSIBILITY OF COMPLETING ENVIRONMENTAL STUDY OF DEMPSTER PIPELINE PRIOR TO SEPTEMBER 1

**Mr. Bill Jarvis (Perth-Wilmot):** Mr. Speaker, I have a supplementary question for the Minister of Fisheries and the Environment relating to the question which I put to the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources yesterday but which he was unfortunately unable to answer. In view of the emphasis placed by the National Energy Board upon the importance of the Dempster link in the Alcan proposal, and in view of the fact that there has been no environmental study prepared or commissioned on this 600 mile corridor, is the minister able to tell us whether his department has the capacity to complete an