

him now, but we are still hopeful, and we have reason to be hopeful, that this line will be in place by the time that was specified earlier when we gave a commitment to see that the line is built.

**Senator Smith:** Honourable senators, as another supplementary, I should like to ask the minister if those factors, which he says have to be taken into consideration in calculating the time of arrival of the pipeline in Halifax, were not taken into consideration when the promise was first made?

**Senator Olson:** Honourable senators, I think it is fair to say that we cannot make valid calculations based on some labour disputes that could not be foreseen at the time.

**Senator Smith:** In other words, the honourable gentleman seems to be saying that they made the promise without taking into consideration factors which he now says ought to have been considered, and therefore he is not prepared to repeat the promise that completion will be in 1983.

**Senator Olson:** Honourable senators, the commitment was made to build it, and the estimate of the time required to get it in place was clear. My honourable friend knows very well that it cannot be built without workers. If the workers are on strike, it is not being built.

**Senator Smith:** I know that, and I am sure the minister knows that one should not make promises unless one takes into consideration all the probable factors that will affect the carrying out of that promise.

**Senator Olson:** Honourable senators, the objective stated by the government has not changed.

**Hon. Raymond J. Perrault (Leader of the Government):** Hear, hear.

**Senator Smith:** At least the objective has not changed.

**Senator Perrault:** You are so negative.

**Senator Smith:** I am sorry, I did not hear what the Leader of the Government said. I don't suppose I missed much, but still, if he would like to have me hear it, he might repeat it.

**Senator Perrault:** You are too negative.

**Senator Smith:** You think I am too negative? I always like to be practical—whether or not it happens to please the Leader of the Government to deal in practicalities—and that is what I am being today.

● (1430)

With reference to the off-oil program which has been given great publicity in relation to—

**The Hon. the Speaker:** Honourable senator, this is not a supplementary question, so I give the floor to Senator Leblanc.

**Senator Smith:** Thank you, Your Honour. I shall ask the question again later.

[Translation]

**Hon. Fernand E. Leblanc:** Honourable senators, I would like to put a supplementary question to the Minister of State for Economic Development concerning the construction of the Q & M pipeline. There seems to be a labour dispute, as some 40 welders are on strike. There is speculation that if the strike is not settled soon, the construction of the pipeline could be delayed for a year. *La Presse* reports that for the time being Mr. Lévesque's government refuses to intervene in the dispute. However, if construction is delayed for a whole year, this would have a negative effect on the public, who should be able to use natural gas and therefore pay less for energy.

Since the federal government has jurisdiction to some extent over the construction of the pipeline, could it not make some attempt at settling this dispute? As such, I think a labour dispute comes under provincial jurisdiction. But would it not be possible to take some steps to settle this dispute which is detrimental to Quebecers?

[English]

**Senator Olson:** Honourable senators, the federal government has jurisdiction over pipelines that are built under a permit issued by the National Energy Board. That, of course, is the case with this pipeline. However, we do not have jurisdiction with regard to most or, perhaps, all the labour unions. That, clearly, comes within provincial jurisdiction.

I think the most satisfactory answer I can give to this question, and to the previous one asked by Senator Smith, is to say that I shall get a report on it, and have an analysis done of the implications involved, so that we can base our approach on rather better information than is to be found in newspaper speculation. When I say "speculation," I am not evading the point, but it is just opinion with regard to what might happen in this case. I shall, however, try to obtain a little more firm information respecting the prospect for the balance of this year.

[Translation]

**Senator Leblanc:** What I fear, of course, is that, since this is a federal pipeline, the Quebec government, which seems bent on resuming its campaign for sovereignty-association, will start saying in Quebec: "The federal government is to blame for what is happening; sort it out with that government." That is why I say that we should see to it that this issue is quite clear in the minds of Quebecers, so that they will not think, as the provincial government would have them believe, it seems that the federal government is to blame. I feel it is important that the minister make a statement on this matter.

[English]

**Senator Olson:** Honourable senators, I shall have to take that into consideration. I hope that all members, on both sides of this house, will be clear that this is not the responsibility of the federal government.