

Inquiries of the Ministry

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. I suggest to the hon. member that he should put his question.

Mr. Brewin: I was just coming to it, Mr. Speaker. What action or leadership is the Canadian government taking in this crisis which may affect the future existence of the Commonwealth?

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): We are pursuing the action which we began in Singapore and which did not meet with the approval of the opposition. None the less, it is the action we are pursuing.

Mr. Brewin: I wonder if the Prime Minister could tell us what action he was pursuing that was not approved by the opposition.

Mr. Trudeau: The hon. member might read the statement that the leader of his party made when I returned from Singapore.

* * *

INDUSTRY**MAINTENANCE OF OPERATION OF McBEAN COAL MINE**

Mr. Robert Muir (Cape Breton-The Sydneys): My question is for the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources. In view of the serious unemployment problem in Nova Scotia, will the minister advise the House what reply has been given to the request of that province's mines minister for a \$2 million grant over a two-year period to continue the operation of the McBean mine in Pictou county?

Hon. J. J. Greene (Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources): I have had meetings with both the mines minister and the premier in regard to the McBean mine. The subsidy program is, of course, expiring. The coffers of the subsidy program are empty. We are considering their suggestion at present but as yet have no answer for them.

While I am on my feet—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. I wonder if the minister might allow the hon. member a supplementary question. Perhaps after that he will be given the floor for the purpose of answering a prior question.

Mr. Muir: May I ask the minister how long it will take, how many weeks or months, before a decision has been reached by the cabinet with regard to this request for a grant by the Nova Scotia mines minister, Mr. Sullivan?

Mr. Greene: I cannot put a definite date on it but I can assure my hon. friend that my department is working on it very actively, and we will have a recommendation one way or another as soon as possible.

[Mr. Brewin.]

OIL**SUGGESTED FEASIBILITY STUDY OF ECONOMICS OF BUILDING PIPELINE FROM WEST TO SERVE EASTERN CANADA**

Hon. J. J. Greene (Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources): Mr. Speaker, I should like to answer a question put by the hon. member for Calgary North. He has been most patient in waiting for an answer, for which I thank him.

In response to his question may I say that the government does not envisage embarking, either alone or with outside help, on any special study of the economic feasibility of a pipeline from western Canada to markets east of Ontario. The National Energy Board is, however, keeping itself fully informed as to the factors bearing on such a project. I expect the board to be able to advise the government as to security factors bearing on oil supply to eastern Canada and on the relative competitive position of western Canadian oil in these eastern markets. The board will be in a position to give prompt consideration to any application from the private sector for the construction of such a line.

Mr. Eldon M. Woolliams (Calgary North): I thank the minister for his full answer, but it was not quite an answer to my question. I wonder whether he would reconsider it in these terms. I appreciate the function of the National Energy Board, but I am asking whether, in order to get an economic feasibility study of the building of a pipeline, he would set up a task force rather than leave it to free enterprise or the importers of crude petroleum who are also the ones who would bring it from the Prairies and the Arctic? What I want is an independent study, separate and apart from free enterprise.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Come over here, Eldon.

Mr. Greene: I am shocked and dismayed to find that my hon. friend has joined his colleagues in the New Democratic Party in this view.

Mr. Woolliams: Answer the question.

Mr. Greene: To date we are satisfied that the present system is in the best interests both of the producers in the west and of the eastern consumers. We are going to abide by the present procedures as we think they are more satisfactory than those of the New Democratic Party.

Mr. T. C. Douglas (Nanaimo-Cowichan-The Islands): Since we have had conflicting answers about whether or not there has been a feasibility study on extending the pipeline to Montreal, who is conducting such a study and whether it is completed, can the minister now give us a definitive answer? Has a feasibility study been made and,