

*Oral Questions*

tion so that all of these impartial boards, such as the CTC, would have before them from time to time, when requests are being made such as the Bell Telephone application, those who would act on behalf of the public interest or as a defender of the general public in order to present their case with the same effectiveness as that possessed by those speaking on behalf of very large corporations that have the resources to make their presentations effectively?

**Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister):** Mr. Speaker, under the law which created the CTC and which was debated at great length in parliament not many years ago, the CTC was set up indeed as a defender of the public interest, one which was to look into all aspects of any question before authorizing any rate increase. That is why in a sense the control of rates, of prices and of wages in our economy, if recommended at all, will have to be done by boards that represent the public interest, as does the CTC. I will certainly consider the suggestion made by the hon. member to see if in some way the board can be assisted in its duties of representing the public interest, and if the suggestion has merit we will discuss legislation.

**Mr. MacDonald (Egmont):** In this consideration would the Prime Minister consider as an example the months of testimony before the CTC, when it appeared obvious that the role of the CTC was that of a judge hearing the facts impartially. The fact that one very large corporation had tremendous resources while those who attempted to represent the public interest did so, unfortunately, with very limited effectiveness because they lacked similar resources, and that this may be one reason for the decision with which we are faced now?

**Mr. Trudeau:** The hon. member is really questioning the philosophy which is at the base of all public interest boards. I believe parliament agreed at the time—and I certainly still share that view—that tribunals, boards and judicial or quasi-judicial bodies are set up to represent the public interest. The idea that they are automatically influenced by some strong representation made to them is not one which I share. I repeat that there may be some added procedures that might be introduced to ensure that the board is enlightened further, but until I have seen evidence to the contrary I do take the view that these boards are there and that they do speak for the public interest. Indeed that is why, as the Minister of Communications just indicated in his answer, they are removed from the executive power, to make sure that there will be no undue interference by politicians in the subject.

**Mr. MacDonald (Egmont):** Mr. Speaker, I have one final supplementary question. In attempting to review this process—and I think it is the process, not the philosophy, with which hon. members are concerned—would the Prime Minister inquire or those who did make representations at the recent hearing whether they felt they had adequate resources to deal effectively with some of the very complicated issues that were adjudicated by the CTC?

**Mr. Trudeau:** I can certainly look into the matter, but I am afraid there is a difference of principle between the

[Mr. MacDonald (Egmont).]

attitude of the hon. member and that of the board as it is set up under the law. I can only remind the House that, indeed, if any form of control is to be introduced it has to be set at arms' length from the government and it should not be subject to interference, not only by the government but by parliament, on a day to day basis.

**Mr. Stanfield:** That is not the question.

**Hon. Alvin Hamilton (Qu'Appelle-Moose Mountain):** Mr. Speaker, would the Prime Minister, in his reconsideration of this very important matter of principle, look at the debate on the establishment of the CTC which took place in January, 1967, and in particular examine the motion of the hon. member for Peace River, seconded by myself, on this very point in which we gave the examples of Australia and Saskatchewan as a way of not interfering with the efficient handling by the CTC but at the same time giving parliament some control, and look in particular at how the vote took place on that amendment?

**Mr. Speaker:** The hon. member for Kootenay West.

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**ENERGY**

SUGGESTED IMMEDIATE DISCUSSIONS WITH UNITED STATES AND OTHERS ON TRANSPORT OF ALASKAN OIL THROUGH CANADA

**Mr. Randolph Harding (Kootenay West):** Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources. In view of the Supreme Court decision announced today in Washington, which effectively barred the Alaska pipeline and the proposed tanker route along the Pacific coast, is the minister considering holding immediate discussions with the United States authorities, the British Columbia government and others on the subject of the only alternative left to the United States, namely, the transport of Alaskan oil through Canadian territory?

**Hon. Donald S. Macdonald (Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources):** Mr. Speaker, we would like to see the decision and have a full report on it and also get an assessment of its impact under United States law, namely, whether the decision of the Supreme Court effectively bars Alyeska or whether possible Congressional action can remove that particular bar.

As I have told the House several times, the government has been active in presenting to the U.S. administration the possibilities of the Mackenzie route through Canada for Alaskan oil and, as I also indicated, this, of course, is dependent upon the terms of the National Energy Board Act which in the first instance puts the judgment on this in the hands of the National Energy Board. What we would like to do is to get a full assessment of the U.S. position before making further public statements at this time.

**Mr. Harding:** Will the minister consider placing this important matter before the appropriate standing committee of the House for investigation and study without delay?