

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Friday, March 25, 1960

The house met at 11 a.m.

MISCELLANEOUS PRIVATE BILLS

Seventh report of standing committee on miscellaneous private bills—Mr. McCleave.

VACANCY

Mr. Rodolphe Leduc (Gatineau): Mr. Speaker, I hereby give notice, pursuant to section 10 of the House of Commons Act, that a vacancy has occurred in the representation of the House of Commons for the electoral district of Labelle, in the province of Quebec, by reason of the appointment to the Senate of Hon. Henri Courtemanche, the member therefor.

NATURAL GAS

NORTHWEST TERRITORIES—ANNOUNCEMENT RESPECTING DISCOVERY

Hon. Alvin Hamilton (Minister of Northern Affairs and National Resources): Mr. Speaker, hon. members will have been pleased to read this morning in the press of a natural gas discovery in the Northwest Territories. According to information which I have received, the Home Oil Company Limited has obtained substantial showings of gas in a test well which they are drilling in the southwest corner of the Mackenzie district in the Northwest Territories, about eight miles north of the British Columbia boundary and about eight miles west of the Simpson trail.

This well is the second of a series of six which are to be drilled by Home Oil Company this winter and next winter on a farm-out arrangement with Canada Southern Petroleum Limited, which is the holder of permits to explore for oil and gas in approximately 1½ million acres of potential oil and gas land in the southwest corner of the Mackenzie district. Home Oil Company, which is a Canadian company, is committed to spend \$6.5 million on this land during the next five years. Several other oil companies are also actively engaged in the search for oil and gas in this general area, which has been for some time regarded as very promising. It is worth noting that this area forms the northerly geological extension of the Kotcho lake and Petitot river areas of northeast British Columbia in which in recent months impressive discoveries of gas have been made.

It is at this time far too early to attempt to evaluate the significance of the present discovery. In itself it is not conclusive proof of a major gas field, but it is certainly a most encouraging indication and tends to support the expectations that the area may have a very substantial gas potential.

In order to provide easier access to this area, which lies about 150 miles north of the Alaska highway at Fort Nelson, I have made provision in my departmental estimates for the fiscal year 1960-61 for funds to survey the route of a road from the British Columbia boundary through this area. The precise route to be followed by the road will be chosen in such a way as to serve best the interests of oil companies engaged in the task of developing the resources of the area.

Mr. Speaker, I did not plan it this way but it seems to me to be very auspicious that this discovery of a new petroleum area in the north should come so close to the 20th anniversary of the first election to the House of Commons of the Prime Minister (Mr. Diefenbaker) who has done so much to attract attention to the north.

Hon. L. B. Pearson (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, I think it is unusual to make announcements of this kind in the House of Commons on the development of our natural and human resources. We can, however, welcome them both because the country is in need of both. The announcement which the minister has just made underlines the variety and the richness of the resources of our country. As I say, the announcement, although it is unusual, is welcome. It also points up the desirability of early action being taken to make possible the export of gas from this country.

Mr. Hazen Argue (Assiniboia): The development of Canada's natural resources is important to the future of our nation. We have some differences with the policy the government is following but, of course, any indication of their development is most welcome. I really do not see how this matter could have very much association with the anniversary of the Prime Minister's entry into politics in this country.

An hon. Member: Gas.

Mr. Argue: Somebody says it has to do with gas. Of course, that was not my thought.

Mr. Hees: It is the beginning of a great development era.