

Oral Questions

On Monday the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources and the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development announced a major exploration agreement with PanArctic. On that same day, the President of PanArctic said that he would have difficulty fulfilling the terms of the agreement, in part because of the decision of the National Energy Board to postpone hearings on the Arctic Pilot Project. According to PanArctic, this delay will raise costs and put the project in jeopardy, and some of PanArctic's member companies want out. In view of this situation, what steps is the Government taking to ensure that the Arctic Pilot Project will not join that very long list of megaprojects which have been killed by the National Energy Program?

● (1415)

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Madam Speaker, I have not been made aware of the statement alluded to by the Hon. Member, but I am happy to take notice of it on behalf of the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources who is due in the House very shortly.

Some Hon. Members: Here he is.

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Hees: The instant minister.

REQUEST FOR ACTION TO ASSIST PROJECT

Mr. Harvie Andre (Calgary Centre): Madam Speaker, I see that the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources is here now. Would the Minister comment on the actions he is prepared to take in view of the indications by the President of PanArctic that, because of the National Energy Board decision to delay hearings on the Arctic Pilot Project, PanArctic may not be able to fulfil the obligations of the exploration agreement that was announced the other day, and that unless action is taken by the Minister or by this Government, the Arctic Pilot Project will join the long list of casualties of the National Energy Program? Is the Minister free to do something else beyond babysitting the creation of his predecessor? If he is, what action will he take to ensure that some of the people who are now unemployed might be employed as a result of that project?

Hon. Jean Chrétien (Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources): Madam Speaker, I indicated to the Press, and I am glad to have this question, that I hope the matter will be dealt with expeditiously by the National Energy Board, a body created by this House of Commons for which I am the minister who reports in the House. However, there are some problems for clarification by the National Energy Board before it can render a judgment.

I do hope the National Energy Board will be able to tell those participants in the Arctic gas project that they can export gas. I have discussed this problem with the National Energy Board. The Board has assured me that it has not put aside the request, but has just asked for a delay to get some more information. I hope the Board will be able to deal with

the project as soon as possible. If we can sell some Arctic natural gas to the European market and to other nations, I will be delighted.

POSITION OF MINISTER

Mr. Harvie Andre (Calgary Centre): Madam Speaker, my supplementary question is also for the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources. The President of PanArctic was quoted last week in the *Montreal Gazette* as saying that fundamental changes to the National Energy Program are going to be required to get his company and other companies in the energy sector back to work employing Canadians. In a Canadian Press story from New York, on November 15, the Minister is quoted as saying:

The last thing we need is a period of uncertainty.

That statement is nearly right. That is the second last thing we need. The last thing we need is inertia from the Minister which will only guarantee that the tens of thousands of Canadians who could be employed in energy related projects will continue to be employed.

Is the Minister, within the context of the cabinet decision, able to exercise his responsibility as Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources and do more than babysit the creation of his predecessor, and introduce some of these changes which would give some hope to those tens of thousands of Canadians who are unemployed today as a result of the National Energy Program?

Hon. Jean Chrétien (Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources): Madam Speaker, I think the Hon. Member likes to utter a lot of rhetoric. I have been in touch with the industry. I have been in Calgary and in New York. People understand that we have a program in place that we want to make work. I told the industry that I would offer stability and decisiveness. That is exactly what I am doing at this time. I would like to ask the Hon. Member to check with his friends in Calgary who, I am sure, will tell him that they like this approach. They know what is the name of the game. I intend to make the program work and Hon. Members can see that the 1983 predictions for the oil and gas industry are for a much better year than 1982.

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NATIONAL ENERGY PROGRAM

IMPACT ON PETROCHEMICAL PROJECTS

Hon. Don Mazankowski (Vegreville): Madam Speaker, I would like to direct my question to the Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce. The Minister knows, I am sure, that the National Energy Program has had a disastrous effect upon the petrochemical industry and that, if it is not salvaged soon, it will collapse in a similar manner in which the oil sands and heavy oil projects collapsed. Right now something like a dozen petrochemical projects worth \$3.5 billion to \$4 billion are on