

QUESTION PERIOD

[English]

THE CONSTITUTION DEBATE

LEGALITY OF PROPOSED RESOLUTION

Hon. Jacques Flynn (Leader of the Opposition): Honourable senators, I have a question for the Leader of the Government. In view of the decision taken yesterday by five premiers, who may be joined by two others, if not more, to place before the courts the legality of the resolution which the present government intends to push through Parliament, is it the intention of the government to proceed notwithstanding, or would the government rather join with the premiers in seeking the opinion of the courts on the legality of its intentions?

Hon. Raymond J. Perrault (Leader of the Government): Honourable senators, the government is satisfied that its anticipated action is legal. It is the intention of the government to proceed with its plan concerning the proposed resolution and the motion now being debated in the other place.

Honourable senators are aware that if governments were precluded from initiating action each time an appeal was filed with the courts on behalf of an individual or another level of government, it could effectively frustrate the actions of all governments. Therefore the government is proceeding in the reasonable certainty that its action is legal.

Senator Flynn: Is that certainty equal to the certainty the government had some years ago when it introduced Bill C-60 and felt that it could proceed in the manner provided under that bill, only to find that the Supreme Court disagreed with the government's view?

ENERGY

AVAILABILITY OF SURPLUS ALBERTA GAS TO EASTERN CANADA

Hon. G. I. Smith: Honourable senators, I should like to direct a question to the Minister of State for Economic Development. Against the background of what I believe to be a correct report that approximately 14 public utilities in the United States have signed an agreement with TransCanada PipeLines for the purchase of large quantities of surplus Alberta gas—I believe the report mentioned 185 million cubic feet per day—and since the gas to be carried eastward by the proposed Q and M pipeline was to be surplus Alberta gas, is such an arrangement likely to interfere with the availability of Alberta's surplus gas for the Q and M pipeline if its extension further eastward into Atlantic Canada is approved by the National Energy Board?

Hon. H. A. Olson (Minister of State for Economic Development): Honourable senators, I have not seen the report to which my honourable friend refers, but I presume that it is a contractual arrangement for gas that has already been approved for export by the National Energy Board. I think—I guess would be a better way to put it—that it is the contractual arrangement for gas that has already been approved for

export by the National Energy Board, perhaps that volume of gas that was approved for delivery through the southern sections of the Alaska pipeline when they are built, formerly known as the prebuild sections.

● (1420)

I can also tell my honourable friend that the requirements for the Q and M, or the projected requirements, have been taken into account as part of the Canadian requirement before an amount was declared surplus to all of Canada's requirements, which is an obligation that they have to satisfy before they issue any export permit.

I can also advise my honourable friend that since the last time the National Energy Board reported its findings on the amount of gas reserves in Canada, both for domestic and other consumption, there has been a further substantial increase in those reserves. I am unaware that there is an application now for sales in addition to what has already been approved.

Senator Smith: I would like to ask a supplementary question. I am not sure whether I sufficiently conveyed the geographical location of the destination of this surplus gas to the minister. I understand that the 185 million cubic feet per day to which I referred is to be delivered to the New England states, or at any rate, the northeastern states, and I would be inclined to doubt whether that would have anything to do with gas transmitted through the so-called prebuild.

Senator Olson: That does clarify the situation. I will have to look into this. I suppose we cannot tell at this point in time whether or not someone is selling or someone is purchasing prospective gas sales. What I can assure my honourable friend of is that there will be no gas exported until and unless it is approved by the National Energy Board. If it has already been approved it has to be included in some previous application; but if it is a prospective approval, it has to go through the National Energy Board, and if anybody buys or sells, or whatever they do, it is not going to leave Canada without that approval.

Senator Smith: I thank the minister for his comments. I wonder if I could trespass on his good nature a little further by inquiring whether, if I sent across to him the information I have about this matter, he might deal with it further tomorrow.

Senator Olson: Yes, honourable senators.

[Translation]

THE BUDGET

DATE OF PRESENTATION

Hon. Martial Asselin: Honourable senators, I have a question for the Minister of State for Economic Development.

The Minister of Finance told us recently that he intends to bring down his budget before the end of October or rather during the second half of October.

As the constitutional debate will apparently last beyond that date, does the government intend to adjourn that debate to