

PURCHASES OF OIL COMPANIES—GOVERNMENT INVOLVEMENT

Hon. H. A. Olson (Minister of State for Economic Development): While I am on my feet, I think it would be helpful if I now answered a question raised by Senator Charbonneau in January. I was going to wait until delayed answers were called for, but I think it would be more appropriate to answer that now.

Senator Charbonneau asked whether the government was involved in any alleged negotiations to purchase oil companies.

The answer is that the federal government is involved to the extent that Petro-Canada is an agency of the Crown and, therefore, would be acting within the guidelines of government policy.

Since the question was posed in January, there has, of course, been an announcement of Petro-Canada's acquisition of Petrofina. In retrospect, Senator Charbonneau's question appears to have been prophetic. I would, of course, not wish to comment on his speculations with respect to other acquisitions.

By way of answering the questions, I think the honourable senator should appreciate that corporate acquisitions, and any information pertaining to such activities, are extremely delicate matters for a variety of fairly obvious reasons. Accordingly, I will not, nor should I be asked, to comment on rumoured takeovers. I would note, however, that since the National Energy Program is in part designed to restructure and Canadianize the oil and gas industry, one would expect activities and rumours of the sort which we have witnessed over the past several months to continue.

Hon. C. William Doody: I have a supplementary question for the minister. Would the minister undertake to make available to the Senate the details of the assessment once the deal is finally consummated? I understand that an outside consultant was hired to help the company arrive at this assessment. Could those documents be made available?

Senator Olson: Honourable senators, yes, that becomes part of public information after it is completed.

CANADA-UNITED STATES RELATIONS

GARRISON DAM PROJECT

Hon. Joseph-Philippe Guay: Honourable senators, I would like to ask the Leader of the Government a question which relates to one that I asked in the house on January 20. It was in reference to the Garrison Dam project and it involves Canada-United States relations. At that time my leader said:

—they have invited Canadian scientific and technical experts to visit their Water and Power Resources Service Engineering and Research Centre in Colorado—

That is a long way from my area.

—to review possible project design modifications. This visit is tentatively scheduled for tomorrow and the following two days—that is, Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday.

The leader was making reference to January 21, 22 and 23.

[Senator Olson.]

There is mounting concern in Manitoba about the Garrison Dam project, and the insistence of the new Governor of North Dakota, Governor Olson, that the project be continued. This refers to the 100,000 hectares of land that they would drain. All of that water would come into Manitoba and destroy the fish in our lakes—a point to which I made reference before. Governor Olson is introducing new legislation in North Dakota to provide funds to finish the project. According to an article in the *Winnipeg Free Press* of Saturday, February 14, 1981, he said he will be asking for full funding, and will be presenting the request to the President of the United States this coming week.

In view of the insistence of the governor that the project be carried on, I think we cannot now sit back and say we will just wait and see what will be the outcome of the meeting which took place a couple of weeks ago. I hope the leader will be able to obtain the results of that meeting for us, but I also believe that possibly some representations should now be made at the federal level for the protection of Manitobans.

Hon. Raymond J. Perrault (Leader of the Government): Honourable senators, I want to thank Senator Guay for his eloquent expression of concern about Canadian interest in this very important matter. I will take the question as urgent notice, and attempt to obtain information which can be provided to Senator Guay and other honourable senators as soon as possible.

THE CONSTITUTION

REFERENCES TO APPEAL COURTS BY PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENTS

Hon. Raymond J. Perrault (Leader of the Government): Honourable senators, I have a delayed answer to a question asked on January 13 by Senator Roblin regarding the reference of the government's constitutional proposals to appeal courts.

As I stated earlier to the honourable senator, the government intends to continue with its announced schedule. I might add, however, that the government is encouraged by the recent decision of the Manitoba Court of Appeal in this matter, and is naturally interested in the outcome of various other court cases.

Hon. Jacques Flynn (Leader of the Opposition): You mean the government is not discouraged.

Senator Perrault: Honourable senators, the government is made up of inveterate optimists.

PARLIAMENT

INTERNSHIP PROGRAM

Hon. Raymond J. Perrault (Leader of the Government): Honourable senators, I have a delayed answer to a question asked on February 12 by Senator Marshall concerning the parliamentary internship program.