

S.O. 22

the restoration of those rights and freedoms. Canada has spoken out and acted strongly on behalf of human rights in South Africa. We must speak and act just as strongly on behalf of human rights in eastern Europe.

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ENERGY

DELAY IN SIGNING AGREEMENT WITH NOVA SCOTIA

Mr. Russell MacLellan (Cape Breton-The Sydneys): Mr. Speaker, on March 28, 1985, the Minister of Energy signed away billions of dollars to the oil companies. After accomplishing that task, she said that a new agreement with Nova Scotia was "next on her agenda". She needed, however, "a weekend to rest". It is now December 10 and there is still no deal. Nova Scotia's Energy Minister now says that the deal will not be ready until the new year. It sure has been one long weekend.

Why is it taking so long to sign a deal with Nova Scotia? Maybe it is because of what the federal Energy Minister's policies have done to Nova Scotia. Thanks to the new policies there is only rig operating off the coast of Nova Scotia. There were nine last year.

John Beddome, President of Dome Petroleum, says the new policy means a gain in western Canada but: "It comes at the expense of Nova Scotia's hopes for its Venture project at Sable Island."

Allan Ruffman, Vice-President of Geomarine Associates Limited, says that oil and gas activity off Nova Scotia will be cut in half in 1986, following a steep reduction this year.

Informetrica predicts "meagre growth for Nova Scotia's economy" this year.

Perhaps one of the stumbling blocks in signing the deal is just how to compensate Nova Scotia for the revenues lost compared to its 1982 deal with the former Government. But how do you compensate for completely destroying oil and gas activity off the coast of Nova Scotia, Mr. Speaker? The Minister may need a few more weekends to think about it.

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GOVERNMENT EXPENDITURES

REMUNERATION OF FORMER ENERGY CHIEF OF STAFF

Mr. Nelson A. Riis (Kamloops-Shuswap): Mr. Speaker, I was flabbergasted this morning, as I am sure were many of my colleagues, when we learned that the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources, the Hon. Member for Vancouver Centre (Miss Carney), has been using the taxpayers' money to pay members of her staff salaries well above the levels set down by the Treasury Board.

The Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources paid Mr. Harry Near \$50,000 for only four months work as her Chief of Staff last year. On an annual basis, this works out to \$150,000.

Mr. Near's contract was extended for an additional two months, for which he picked up the tidy sum of \$22,000. Outrageous, you say! Incredible! But wait, there is more. The Minister of Energy used the taxpayers' money to pay Mr. Near another \$25,000 for six weeks' work last spring, and another \$10,000 for four weeks' work this past summer.

The Hon. Member for Vancouver Centre was the only government Minister to make a special request to the Treasury Board for additional sums of taxpayers' money to pay her staff salaries well above the guidelines. This Minister is single-handedly giving a new meaning to the old cliché that it pays to have friends in high places. If you are a friend of the Minister of Energy, Mr. Speaker, it not only pays, but it pays handsomely.

What sort of signal does it send out to ordinary Canadians when they find out that the Minister of Energy is spending their hard-earned tax dollars on huge salaries for her friends? Last week my colleague, the Hon. Member for Nickel Belt (Mr. Rodriguez), accused the former Minister of the Environment of spending taxpayers' money like a drunken sailor. I would like to point out that at least drunken sailors spend their own money. The Minister of Energy would do well to remember that.

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[Translation]

HOUSING

GOVERNMENT POLICY

Mr. Jean-Luc Joncas (Matapédia-Matane): Mr. Speaker, I would like to draw the attention of the House to the figures published recently by Statistics Canada for housing starts in this country during the month of November.

These figures indicate an increase of 58 per cent, that is, an annual seasonally adjusted total of 197,000 housing starts, compared with a total of 125,000 last year.

In urban centres with a population of over 10,000, the number of units increased from 8,647 in 1984 to 14,260 in November 1985. This represents an increase of nearly 65 per cent. The number of single-family dwellings under construction in the same centres over the same period increased from 5,271 to 8,125, an increase of 54 per cent.

Mr. Speaker, this increase in housing starts is largely due to our policies to promote economic renewal. Falling interest rates, more stable prices and a series of favourable economic forecasts have made it attractive for Canadians to carry out their residential construction projects. This country is caught up in a new wave of optimism.

Mr. Speaker, these new projects are not only a boon to home builders but also to manufacturers of household appliances, surveyors, architects, moving companies and the general public.