

Oral Questions

something about this very inefficient Corporation? And when will he report to the House that he has done so?

Hon. Pierre De Bané (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans): Madam Speaker, I can tell the Hon. Member that I had the pleasure approximately two weeks ago of meeting with the Associate Minister of Resources of Alberta, who came to me to talk precisely about that topic. I would remind the Hon. Member that the Government of Alberta is a member of the board of the Freshwater Corporation. The matter to which he is referring is being investigated at the moment by the provincial authorities in Alberta.

On the other hand, I would remind the Hon. Member that when the Conservatives were in power they investigated the usefulness of the Freshwater Fish Marketing Corporation. My information is that, after having met with the fishermen of the three western Provinces, the overwhelming evidence was that that mechanism, in which there is room for improvement, of course, is the best mechanism by far to bring about stability and maximize the earnings of the fishermen.

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PIPELINES**ALASKA HIGHWAY PIPELINE COMMISSION—OPERATIONAL COSTS**

Mr. Arnold Malone (Crowfoot): Madam Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources. Since he has not been able to give any projections in response to repeated questions in the House as to when the Alaska Highway Northern Gas Pipeline will be initiated on the northern route, how can he continue to justify keeping the Commission in place, which has budgeted for more than \$5.3 million this year, if he cannot also point specifically to something they are doing today which could not be done when the pipeline is in fact put in place, which could take anywhere from ten years or into the next century? Why are you paying your Liberal friends \$5 million if you cannot justify their activity?

● (1450)

Hon. Jean Chrétien (Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources): Madam Speaker, I think the Hon. Member should know, if he is aware of the facts, that it was at the request of the industry that we are keeping this outfit in operation. The cost of this operation is paid through the Government by the industry.

An Hon. Member: It is paid by the Canadian consumer.

Mr. Chrétien: It costs the taxpayer nothing.

REQUEST THAT COMMISSION BE MOTHBALLLED

Mr. Arnold Malone (Crowfoot): It matters not, Madam Speaker, from where the request comes. It matters totally how the Government of Canada accounts to its people. What we

have is an expenditure of \$5.3 million, for which there is no accountability of activity. If the pipeline is not scheduled to be built in the foreseeable future, I ask the Minister again why he does not set this project aside until such time as he can get a commitment that the pipeline is, in fact, imminent and will be built in the near future, and then he can go ahead with activities. What activities are there today that cannot be done by the Commission that can be set up again and done tomorrow when the pipeline is being constructed?

[Translation]

Hon. Jean Chrétien (Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources): In my opinion, the Commission's role consists in maintaining the relations that are necessary to keep this project alive, until such time as it will be possible to proceed, and if the Hon. Member does not understand, I will say it again in French. The expenses incurred on this project are not paid by the Government but by the industry, which asked to have this program maintained, and it is the industry that is providing the Government with the necessary funding to pay the salaries to which the Hon. Member is referring.

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[English]

WESTERN GRAIN TRANSPORTATION ACT**REQUEST THAT COMMITTEE HEARINGS BE HELD IN VARIOUS CENTRES**

Mr. Ian Deans (Hamilton Mountain): Madam Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Transport. He is aware that at this time of the year the majority of the farmers who would be most affected by the proposed Crowsnest Pass freight rate changes would be unable to attend committee hearings, either in Ottawa or, for that matter, in most of the other major centres across the country. Is the Minister prepared to assure them now, through the House of Commons, that he will do all in his power to guarantee that if, as, and when the Bill goes to committee, the committee hearings will be held at a time when the farmers themselves will be able to attend the hearings and in centres accessible to the majority of farmers?

Hon. Jean-Luc Pepin (Minister of Transport): Madam Speaker, I understand the Magna Carta of committees is that they decide on their own agenda. I would not dare introduce myself into their decision-making process.

MINISTER'S POSITION

Mr. Ian Deans (Hamilton Mountain): Madam Speaker, I wanted to know on behalf of those people who are concerned if that answer would be forthcoming.

Is it the hope of the Minister and will the Minister express his opinion here in the House of Commons on whether he believes it is important that the farmers who are to be affected by the proposed changes should be given every opportunity to