

*Oral Question*

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Benjamin:** So may I ask the minister, since some 30,000 jobs have been done away with, and since the matter has been raised so often in Parliament, including by members of this House—

**Mr. Epp:** Well, who else?

**Mr. Benjamin:**—and since it was looked upon up until recent years as some kind of a narrow and selfish interest by railway workers, and because of the eradication of those jobs there is inadequate inspection and maintenance of railway rolling stock before it goes on the tracks, will he, under the authority he presently has under the Railway Act and the National Transportation Act, require the railways to restore whatever number of jobs are necessary to guarantee the inspection and maintenance of rolling stock, since the eye can detect defects sooner than computers?

**Mr. Epp:** Yes or no.

**Hon. Jean-Luc Pepin (Minister of Transport):** Madam Speaker, yes.

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Pepin:** Seriously, Madam Speaker, I indicated a moment ago that inspection of railway cars, tank cars in particular, was a job accomplished by a number of people at different times, such as the shipper, the person who receives the car, the railway companies themselves, and the CTC. We have a great number of inspectors there, too. My hon. friend seems to be indicating that the railways do not take their role seriously enough. I will pass my hon. friend's remarks on to them and repeat to them—because I believe in the essential value of the message my hon. friend is delivering—that they have, with others, the responsibility of ensuring railway transportation safety.

● (1430)

REQUEST THAT DISASTER COMPENSATION FUND BE  
ESTABLISHED

**Mr. Les Benjamin (Regina West):** Madam Speaker, this happened not only in Orillia, but also in Coquitlam and one other location in British Columbia yesterday. I will say it before the minister does—one cannot stop all the accidents 100 per cent of the time. However, in the interests of adding to present and future regulations on safety and transportation, would the minister consider establishing a disaster compensation fund by a small surcharge on freight charges or by slight increases in taxes, so that all people can be compensated for damages or evacuation, immediately after any such mishap?

**Hon. Jean-Luc Pepin (Minister of Transport):** Madam Speaker, I understand that the railways are insured. This is a question which comes up fairly regularly.

Concerning the subject of safety, I want to emphasize that air safety, marine safety and railway safety have been a very great preoccupation of mine. My hon. friend will recognize

that I brought in the bill on the transportation of dangerous goods. Since then, and it takes time, progress has been made in terms of bringing the provinces to pass legislation similar to ours, in terms of administrative agreements with the provinces, in terms of the appointment of inspectors and so on.

This afternoon I will issue a progress report on Grange's 15 recommendations. It indicates what has been done concerning each one of the judge's recommendations. I believe very much in safety, particularly railway safety. It will indeed cost the railways more money. We are trying to do the best we can. It takes a bit of time to do the best we can because of the many interests which have to be accommodated in this matter, as with everything else.

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## PUBLIC SERVICE

### PUBLIC STATEMENTS BY PUBLIC SERVANTS

**Hon. Flora MacDonald (Kingston and the Islands):** Madam Speaker, my question is directed to the President of the Treasury Board, and it concerns the repression being practised against some 300,000 Canadian civil servants who, the Prime Minister says, are free to speak about philosophy. In a letter to me dated February 22, with regard to Neil Fraser, the minister stated that while there are no explicit rules governing public statements by public servants, it has long been accepted as a condition of employment in the public service that public servants should not publicly criticize government programs or policies.

I would like to ask the minister was that condition negotiated with the public service unions, and when. Is it administered to persons when they join the public service? Can the minister produce in written terms, the condition of which he speaks?

**Hon. Donald J. Johnston (President of the Treasury Board):** Madam Speaker, the subject was exhausted, it seems to me, in exchanges in this House and outside the House last week.

**Mr. Clark:** Just wait.

**Mr. Johnston:** I do not believe the hon. member for Kingston and the Islands was present during those exchanges. The Prime Minister at no time said that public servants could only speak about philosophy. That particular exchange, I believe—

**Miss MacDonald:** That was the answer.

**Mr. Johnston:**—took place with the Right Hon. Leader of the Opposition, and he threw that out as a subject matter.

**Miss MacDonald:** The only one.

**Mr. Johnston:** I would also like to point out that there are rules of conduct. I mentioned this last week. They vary from department to department because the responsibility for the conduct of public servants has been delegated by the Treasury