

Mr. Friesen: Madam Speaker, I wonder if the minister is operating on the Gregorian calendar. The conference was supposed to be held last fall and the election happens to be this spring, so there is a six-month gap there somewhere. The Speech from the Throne also promised that we must "begin immediately"—and I emphasize immediately—

—to design better methods of providing flexible, portable, and secure pensions both in the private and public sectors. To start this process, my government will soon release a major study on the Canadian pension system.

I should like to know what has happened, and when that study will be released?

[Translation]

Miss Bégin: Frankly, Madam Speaker, being asked such wonderful questions is almost a pleasure because they enable us to give political answers.

[English]

The hon. member does not seem to have in the research bureau of the Tory party a copy of the Lazar report which we begged the Tories, when they formed the government, to release. They had problems with the French translation. We had to wait until we were back in office to release that report. It has been released for months. If the Conservative opposition had had the common sense to identify pensions as a major concern of Canadians for their future, for tomorrow and for their children, they would have appointed a critic for pensions and they would have sent a delegate with me when we travelled to a few European countries to study the pension systems over there.

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ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS

PROPOSED TALKS WITH UNITED STATES PRESIDENT RESPECTING GARRISON DIVERSION PROJECT

Mr. Terry Sargeant (Selkirk-Interlake): Madam Speaker, my question is for the Right Hon. Prime Minister. Early in March, President Reagan of the United States is scheduled to visit Ottawa. Is it the intention of the Prime Minister to use the opportunity of the President's visit to ask the new American administration for a clear and unequivocal commitment that no new funds will be appropriated for the Garrison diversion unit until such time as Canadian concerns about interbasin biota transfers and water quality are resolved?

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Madam Speaker, I have dealt with this matter before. I would remind the House that I raised the matter on my very first meeting with the previous president, President Carter, and that he had given us an undertaking that, in so far as his administration was concerned, he was very conscious and respectful of the Canadian objectives in this regard. I intend to make the same points to President Reagan.

Oral Questions

Mr. Sargeant: Madam Speaker, I hope the new president has more effect with the U.S. Senate appropriations committee than the last one.

U.S. CONGRESS COMMITTEE MEETINGS

Mr. Terry Sargeant (Selkirk-Interlake): Madam Speaker, my supplementary question is for the Secretary of State for External Affairs. In April this year the United States Congress appropriations subcommittees on energy and water development will hold hearings of witnesses in opposition to the Garrison diversion. Is it the intention of the Secretary of State for External Affairs to seek an opportunity to speak before these committees in order to outline Canada's grave concerns about this project, or should the minister be unable to testify, would he be prepared to send an all-party delegation of members of this House to testify at these hearings?

Hon. Mark MacGuigan (Secretary of State for External Affairs): I certainly do not think it would be appropriate for me to appear before an American committee, Madam Speaker. I will consider the hon. gentleman's representations as to the best way in which this should be handled.

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DISASTERS

LOCKEPORT, N.S.—AID FOR REBUILDING OF PLANT DESTROYED BY FIRE

Mr. Lloyd R. Crouse (South Shore): Madam Speaker, I wish to direct a question to the Right Hon. Prime Minister. On January 13 I directed a question to the Deputy Prime Minister concerning the disastrous fire which had occurred in Lockeport, Nova Scotia, and which caused loss of employment for some 305 people. The Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Regional Economic Expansion replied that a proposal concerning this matter would be made within the next few weeks to the advisory board of the department. In the absence of the Minister of Regional Economic Expansion, I will direct my question to the Prime Minister. As more than a month has passed, I would ask if the advisory board has now completed its examination of the company's proposal, a proposal I might add which was made over a month ago by company officials. Will he make this an anniversary day for Lockeport by making a decision which would lead to the rebuilding of the plant in that town?

● (1450)

Mr. Russell MacLellan (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Regional Economic Expansion): In relation to what the hon. member stated, Madam Speaker, the advisory board has made its recommendation. The department in Nova Scotia has presented its proposal to the minister, and he will be making an announcement on this within the next few days.