

Oral Questions

Hon. Donald S. Macdonald (Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources): While I am, of course, very much in favour of this project, Mr. Speaker, actually it is my colleague the Minister of Public Works who currently has the closing of the transaction in hand.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. Perhaps the hon. member might like to ask a supplementary.

Mr. Arrol: Then I direct my question to the appropriate minister, the Minister of Public Works.

Hon. Jean-Eudes Dubé (Minister of Public Works): Mr. Speaker, we are proceeding at the present time with the assembly of the land referred to.

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[Translation]

POST OFFICE

HIRING POLICY—REHABILITATION OF JOB APPLICANTS WITH CRIMINAL RECORDS

Mr. Georges-C. Lachance (Lafontaine): Mr. Speaker, I should like to put a question to the Postmaster General.

Does the government or more specifically the Post Office Department have a hiring policy intended to facilitate the rehabilitation of persons with a criminal record? If so, why does this policy not apply to persons who seek a job as mere despatch handler?

Hon. André Ouellet (Postmaster General): Mr. Speaker, such a policy does exist and if the hon. member has a specific case to put to me, I shall look into it very carefully.

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[English]

INDIAN AFFAIRS

SUPREME COURT DECISION IN NISHGA LAND CASE—SUGGESTED ASSISTANCE TO NATIVES TO OBTAIN PETITION OF RIGHT OR FIAT AND REHEARING

Mr. David Lewis (York South): Mr. Speaker, my question is supplementary to the question about the judgment rendered this morning regarding the claims of the Nishga Indian tribe. I have not had time to read the judgment either, but may I say that the information I have is that the right hon. member for Prince Albert is correct in describing the way in which the seven justices decided the case.

In view of this, may I ask the Minister of Justice whether he, in combination with the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, would consider assisting the representatives of the Nishga tribe (a) to obtain a petition of right or a fiat from the present Attorney General of British Columbia—there may not be much difficulty in doing that—and (b) to apply for a rehearing of their case on the basis of the fiat?

Hon. Otto E. Lang (Minister of Justice): Mr. Speaker, it certainly would be my expectation to have a very early and full discussion of the problem involved in the judg-

[Mr. Arrol.]

ment, and the nature and shape of the judgment, with the minister responsible and to set before him alternatives that may be available. I think we would be interested in seeking an expeditious solution to some of these problems, but I do not think I would want to comment now on the possible avenues for obtaining that solution which may be available to us.

Mr. Lewis: In view of the fact that the result of the judgments rendered by the Supreme Court of Canada this morning means that the issue has not really been decided in any satisfactory way, either from the point of view of the court or from anybody else's point of view, will the minister assure the House that he will try to find some way to place before the courts the merits of the issue for decision?

Mr. Lang: Mr. Speaker, I and members of the House know that this would be the desire of the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development and of the government. It will be my job to attempt to lay before the minister courses of action that will lead to that result. I agree with the hon. gentleman that the substantial issue in the case remains to be decided notwithstanding the judgments, and this would certainly be the approach that we would be examining.

RECOGNITION OF ABORIGINAL RIGHTS OF NORTHERN QUEBEC INDIANS BY PROVINCE BEFORE JAMES BAY HYDRO PROJECT PROCEEDED WITH

Miss Flora MacDonald (Kingston and The Islands): Mr. Speaker, my question is supplementary and is directed to the Minister of Justice. It is also on the question of aboriginal rights. In light of the fact that the Quebec Boundaries Extension Act, 1912, has been accepted by the courts as relevant to the present interests of the Indians of northern Quebec, is the minister going to insist that the government of Quebec fully recognize the aboriginal rights of the Indians in the James Bay area, as required by law, before proceeding with the James Bay power project?

Hon. Otto E. Lang (Minister of Justice): Mr. Speaker, hon. members are aware of the limitations placed on ministers in the House when issues are before the courts.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Hees: You are in serious trouble over there.

Mr. Lang: Hon. members opposite may not respect the tradition in the House of avoiding comment on questions before the courts, but I should like hon. members to know that I do respect that tradition and I do not intend to make any such comment.

Miss MacDonald (Kingston and The Islands): Mr. Speaker, I have a further supplementary question which I will direct to the Prime Minister. Would the Prime Minister tell the House whether the government, in light of this decision, is going to present a brief to the interlocutory hearings, and whether the government takes the position that the Quebec Boundaries Extension Act of 1912 does bind the government of Quebec to reach a mutually