

Oral Questions

overruled the request of Inger Hansen, the information commissioner.

Can the minister explain to the House today his personal reason for not complying with the request of the information commissioner? What is his personal reason for overruling his own officials and the deputy minister of finance? Did the Minister of Finance indeed practise electoral fraud against the people of Canada during the last election campaign?

• (1140)

Hon. Michael Wilson (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, could the hon. member repeat that question?

Mr. Nystrom: Mr. Speaker, I want to know the personal reason why the Minister of Finance has chosen not to release the budget forecast and the forecast on the deficit and interest rates that were made by the Ministry of Finance back in the fall and summer of 1988.

I want to know why he has overridden his own deputy minister of finance, why he overruled Inger Hansen, the information officer? Why does he not have faith in his own officials when they provided him with this information back on August 30? Why did he not release that information? What is the personal reason for that? Did he, indeed, practise electoral fraud against the people of Canada back in 1988?

Mr. Wilson (Etobicoke Centre): Mr. Speaker, I think that is quite uncalled for language. I will not comment specifically on that, but I reject it totally. He asked what the personal reason. There is no personal reason. The reason we are not providing this information is that it was advice to the minister provided by the officials of the department.

The decision that we have taken here is completely in accord with the letter and the intent and the spirit of the Access to Information Act.

Mr. Nystrom: Mr. Speaker, the minister said that "we have not decided to release the information". What I want to know is why he decided not to release the information. The information was given to him by his own deputy minister, by his own access to information people in his own department.

I want to know why he does not have faith in the judgment of his own deputy minister, faith in the judgment of his people who work in his own department in access to information. I want to know why he made the decision, not we, but why he made the decision not to come clean and give us that budget forecasting information from 1988.

Mr. Wilson (Etobicoke Centre): Mr. Speaker, let me state quite categorically that I have full faith in the advice of my deputy minister, Mr. Gorbet. If the hon. member wants me to insert "I" for every time that I used "we" when I was referring to the decision, I am happy to do so.

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COMMUNICATIONS

Mr. Geoff Wilson (Swift Current—Maple Creek—Assiniboia): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Communications. It concerns the proposed amendments to the Railway Act which would have the CRTC solely regulate the telecommunications industry.

Can he respond to the concerns expressed by the Government of Saskatchewan that certain services now provided by Sask-Tel could be significantly more costly if Sask-Tel, in fact, comes under the regulatory jurisdiction of the CRTC?

Mr. Jim Edwards (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Communications): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the question and the opportunity to clarify the intent of the amendments to the Railway Act.

These were called for as a result of the August 14 decision of the Supreme Court of Canada. I can assure the hon. member that the amendments which flow to clear up jurisdictional confusion in the situation and to establish the federal regulatory authority in no way affect the structure, the rates or the autonomy of the prairie telephone companies. Indeed, it is my understanding that there have been discussions as recently as this morning between the Government of Canada and Pre-