

● (1500)

ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT AND REVIEW HEARING IN
RELATION TO ARVIK MINE

Mr. Jim Fulton (Skeena): Madam Speaker, in the absence of the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development my question will go to the Minister of the Environment. I am sure he is aware that start-up approval was given by the previous government to the Arvik mine, in the High Arctic, and that there never have been comprehensive or adequate environmental investigations.

Could the minister give the House a "yes" or "no" answer on whether he supports an environmental assessment and review hearing in relation to the Arvik mine?

Hon. John Roberts (Minister of State for Science and Technology and Minister of the Environment): I am sorry, Madam Speaker; I missed the first part of the question. Normally, this would be a matter dealt with by the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development. It would make an assessment as to the environmental impact, and thereafter opt into the environmental assessment review process. I would be happy to undertake to look at exactly what the situation is now and report to the hon. member.

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[Translation]

STATISTICS CANADA

INQUIRY WHY AGENCY NOW UNDER DEPARTMENT OF SUPPLY
AND SERVICES

Mr. David Berger (Laurier): Madam Speaker, I address my question to the President of the Treasury Board. I would have liked to put it to him last evening at the meeting of the Standing Committee on Miscellaneous Estimates but the meeting was cancelled. Therefore I should like to ask him now to confirm to the House whether his responsibility for Statistics Canada has been transferred to the Department of Supply and Services, why that transfer was not announced in the House and what are the reasons for such a change.

Hon. Donald J. Johnston (President of the Treasury Board): Madam Speaker, it is true the change was made. I think an announcement was made to the press. I believe the right hon. Prime Minister should be asked the reason for this change.

Privilege—Mr. Rae

[English]

PRIVILEGE

MR. RAE—LETTER CIRCULATED BY ROYAL BANK OF CANADA—
RULING BY MADAM SPEAKER

Mr. Bob Rae (Broadview-Greenwood): Madam Speaker, I indicated on May 13 that correspondence from a manager of the Royal Bank in Winnipeg raised a matter of privilege in that there was a fundamental ambiguity in that correspondence, which I read into the record, concerning the lobbying activities of that bank and of the Canadian Bankers' Association.

I also indicated at that time that in our view the letter, which referred to whether or not any bank information could be obtained concerning two of my colleagues in the House of Commons from Manitoba, raised an issue, and that is the question of the confidentiality of members' dealing with their banks and whether that confidentiality would be breached because of such correspondence.

I think it was indicated during that debate that it would be preferable if this matter was dealt with by the Standing Committee on Finance, Trade and Economic Affairs rather than as a matter of privilege. I have always taken the view that if you, Madam Speaker, find that the letter in itself is ambiguous and does raise a possible matter of privilege, the ambiguity should be resolved by the Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections and no where else and that Mr. Beattie, who is the author of the letter, should be asked to testify before that committee as well as Mr. MacIntosh, the president of the Canadian Bankers' Association.

The fact of the matter is that the meetings of the Standing Committee on Finance, Trade and Economic Affairs have been such that it simply has not been possible to call Mr. Beattie. I was working under the assumption that you, Madam Speaker, were going to rule as to whether it was a *prima facie* matter, which in my view would dispose of the case. I ask for a ruling on this as soon as possible since, in my view, the lobbying activities of the Royal Bank and of the Canadian Bankers' Association do pose a *prima facie* question of privilege which should be referred to the Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections. It should be discussed there, and in our view it cannot be dismissed lightly.

Madam Speaker: It was on May 13 last that the hon. member for Broadview-Greenwood (Mr. Rae) raised a question of privilege to complain about a letter from the Royal Bank of Canada which requested from certain bank managers information on two new members of this House. The information seems to have been sought in order to lobby members of the House. All members are subject to such lobbying, particularly in this case by the chartered banks. It may be that in this case it was not even that, but merely an internal communication circulated among certain banks. In my view there is nothing to suggest that it was done to influence or intimidate members of Parliament, as was alleged by some hon. members, and we would have to have proof of that.