

Oral Questions

able energy systems in homes so that such facilities can be put in place this summer for the following winter?

Hon. Jean Chrétien (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, I will take the representation of the hon. member under consideration.

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COMMUNICATIONS

REQUEST CANADIAN EXPERTISE BE USED IN SPACE INDUSTRY

Mr. Cyril Symes (Sault Ste. Marie): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Communications. In view of the meeting today between the minister's officials and those of Telesat to determine whether the American company, Hughes Aircraft, or the Canadian Company, Spar Aerospace, will be awarded the contract for the new Anik C satellite, will the minister assure the House that the decision will be based on the long-term interests of developing Canadian expertise in the space industry and creating Canadian jobs?

Hon. Jeanne Sauv  (Minister of Communications): Mr. Speaker, that is precisely the reason the law provides for the minister to approve the contract, in order to assure himself or herself that the Canadian content and the quality of that Canadian content in the contracts let to certain companies is satisfactory to the government. "Satisfactory to the government" means precisely this, that there will be sufficient benefits within that contract to allow Canadian industrial capacity in the field of space of progress.

Mr. Symes: In view of the fact that Hughes Aircraft is arguing that its contract bid will be cheaper and will preserve existing jobs in its subsidiaries in Canada, but the Ministry of State for Science and Technology, as well as Industry, Trade and Commerce, hold the view that in the long term it is important that the Canadian company get the contract, will the minister assure the House that the well-being of the Canadian scientific and research sector will take precedence over Telesat's insistence that it continue to do business with Hughes?

Mrs. Sauv : Mr. Speaker, Telesat does not insist that it do business with Hughes or any other company. Telesat has called for bids on the next satellite. They have tried to determine which of those bids serves the best interests of Canadian industry. Of course, price is a consideration. I do not think the hon. member would want us to pay an excessive price for a satellite if we could get it cheaper. However, price is not the only consideration. We want to ensure that Canadian industry participates in the design and engineering of these satellites so that it will have a meaningful role to play in the space industry.

[Mr. Schellenberger.]

THE CANADIAN ECONOMY

POST-CONTROLS MONITORING—GOVERNMENT INTENTIONS ON FORM OF AGENCY

Mr. Joe Clark (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Minister of Finance which might help clear away some of the mystery he has created today about the post-controls policy. The minister said he has consulted the Economic Council of Canada to see whether they would take on that job. I have been advised by the vice-president of the Canadian Labour Congress that there has been no approach by this government to them regarding their involvement in post-controls monitoring or their re-entry into the Economic Council of Canada, which seems to be an absurd situation.

I understand the minister to say they have approached the Economic Council but the Economic Council has not replied. That monitoring is to start 36 days from today. Will the minister tell the House of Commons what other options are being considered by the government in case the Economic Council says no, as its director indicated she would want to do.

Hon. Jean Chr tien (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, I have had occasion to deal with this problem many times, both in committee and in the House of Commons. We were proposing a monitoring agency. After discussion with the premiers, we made a proposal to the Economic Council of Canada. We hope to be able to report a final decision within a matter of days and will be glad to advise the Leader of the Opposition and the House of that decision. I will be glad to advise the hon. Leader of the Opposition in the House. There may be a negative decision, but we have said there will be a monitoring agency, and we hope the Economic Council of Canada will accept that role.

● (1202)

Mr. Clark: Mr. Speaker, even if the Economic Council of Canada does accept that role, what will happen 36 days before this activity takes effect? The minister admits he does not know. We have to amend the Economic Council of Canada legislation in order to give it power to gather information. Can the minister tell the House of Commons what legislation is being prepared now, either to amend the statute concerning the Economic Council of Canada or legislation creating a new agency? Is legislation now being drafted by the Department of Justice and, if so, will the minister tell us today the nature of that legislation?

[Translation]

Mr. Chr tien: Mr. Speaker, I would like the hon. member to be a little patient for a few days; he will then get his answer.

[English]

Mr. Clark: Mr. Speaker, we cannot show too much patience with a government that is failing on the economic front to do its duty to bring in a budget and is failing in all sorts of other economic activities. The thing that concerns us so much is that the Postmaster General today indicated that the government may very well be contemplating proceeding with a postal