

Research Council as to areas of higher and lesser priority. Then, given a certain desire to contribute to the general exercise of restraint which is so necessary, as pointed out by the Minister of Finance, the final decisions were taken by the Government.

REQUEST FOR SUSPENSION OF BUDGET REDUCTION

Mr. David Berger (Laurier): How can an intelligent decision be made when workers are told not to speak with reporters and discouraged from going to their MPs?

My supplementary question to the Minister of State for Science and Technology is this: As the health and safety of millions of Canadians and the protection of our environment are at stake, will he suspend the reduction and allow a parliamentary committee to meet publicly with officials of the NRC to study whether the cuts could be implemented in a more appropriate fashion?

Hon. Thomas Siddon (Minister of State for Science and Technology): Mr. Speaker, it was the habit of the previous Government to study problems to death.

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Siddon: The people of Canada have chosen a Government which would act and take the necessary initiatives.

There were no instructions given to any of my officials not to speak to the press. Indeed, there was a key spokesman appointed, and when asked whether officials could approach their Members of Parliament, which was one of the questions discussed in the press, the employees of my Ministry were told that they should be free to do as they wished.

* * *

ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS

CANADIAN WILDLIFE SERVICE—CANCELLATION OF HERRING GULL EGG PROGRAM

Mr. Bill Blaikie (Winnipeg-Birds Hill): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of the Environment. Last week I asked the Minister whether she would reconsider the cancellation of the Herring Gull Egg Program which monitors the levels of toxins in the Great Lakes. Has the Minister had an opportunity to consider the seriousness of the cut-back and to reflect on the wide variety of concern expressed by many people about how serious a mistake it is on her part? Is she willing to reconsider the cancellation of this program for the sake of the health of Canadians?

If she is not willing to reconsider for that reason, will she reconsider it in view of the fact that this constitutes part of an agreement with the United States with respect to Great Lakes water quality and that we should be doing this, if not for our own sake, for the sake of our credibility with the Americans? It is hard to imagine offending the environmental sensitivity of

Oral Questions

the American Government, but this Government has succeeded.

[Translation]

Hon. Suzanne Blais-Grenier (Minister of the Environment): Mr. Speaker, I said last week that if the cuts affecting these biologists were putting the lives of Canadians at risk, I would of course be prepared to review these cutbacks. However, I also said that was not the case at the present time, and I can inform my hon. friend that we still have 78 people working on monitoring toxic material in the Great Lakes, that we are constantly evaluating the quality of water, sediment and precipitation, and that other ministers as well have an ongoing interest in animal and water toxicology.

[English]

Mr. Blaikie: I find it incredible that the Minister can play down the seriousness of this matter.

MINISTER'S VIEW

Mr. Bill Blaikie (Winnipeg-Birds Hill): Mr. Speaker, has the Minister had an opportunity to review the remarks made by her colleague, the Minister of State for Science and Technology, in which he set up a false dichotomy between a healthy industrial economy and environmental issues as being merely service issues? That is the problem as I see it with the Government. Will the Minister undertake to review the remarks made by the Minister of State for Science and Technology and tell the House whether it is also her view of environmental issues?

[Translation]

Hon. Suzanne Blais-Grenier (Minister of the Environment): Mr. Speaker, I am fully aware and I have the assurance that the cuts I proposed in the Department, after consulting with departmental officials, were submitted to and analyzed before all Members of Cabinet, and we are all agreed on the general issues.

[English]

CANADIAN WILDLIFE SERVICE—FUTURE OF EMPLOYEES

Hon. Chas. L. Caccia (Davenport): Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate and express good wishes to the Minister of the Environment on her assignment. I would like to focus the attention of the Minister on the announcement which was made 10 days ago by the Minister of Finance, that one of our finest services, the Canadian Wildlife Service, will be cut by 25 per cent in its strength. This will mean the laying off by next spring of some highly trained biologists, technicians, and office workers, who are presently engaged in studies regarding toxics in the Great Lakes and the toxic contamination in gull eggs, the management of endangered species, the impact of lobbying practices on wildlife, and the impact of wildlife on forestry, just to name a few. Could the Minister inform the House where these fine Canadians will find employment and