

Oral Questions

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

SUGGESTED SHORTENING OF PROPOSED CHRISTMAS RECESS

Hon. George Hees (Prince Edward-Hastings): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Prime Minister. Since the government House leader advised the House on Thursday that it was not the government's plan to have parliament reassemble until January 19 or January 26, but at the same time gave us a long list of legislative items which the government considers must be passed immediately for the public good, a list which cannot possibly receive adequate consideration before Christmas, would the Prime Minister not agree that it makes far more sense to have parliament reassemble on Monday, January 5 so that we can proceed then in a constructive, orderly fashion to deal with this very large volume of work—

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Hees: —in a way in which the people of Canada would like us to operate?

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, there are, of course, certain bills which must be dealt with even before January 1, and I understand that the government House leader has been discussing with his colleagues ways in which this might be done before January 1. However, as the hon. member can see, there is great support on this side for coming back on January 5 or earlier. This is something I hope all parties will discuss. In the name of the government, the government House leader has mentioned January 19 or January 26, but of course we are always willing and able to meet without any holidays or any break at any time.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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AUDITOR GENERAL

DATE OF INTRODUCTION OF LEGISLATION—PROPOSED COMMITTEE STUDY OF REPORT OF INDEPENDENT REVIEW COMMITTEE

Mr. G. W. Baldwin (Peace River): Mr. Speaker, I should like to move to a related subject. I have a question for the President of the Treasury Board.

Mr. Guay (St. Boniface): Do you agree with George?

An hon. Member: Did you hear what George had to say?

Mr. Baldwin: Is it the intention of the government to change its course and move away from the easy ride it has been having in connection with government expenditures? As a substantial element in any such program will the minister introduce, before this House adjourns, for first reading at least, the new bill to deal with the role of the Auditor General so that we can take some steps to staunch the very considerable waste and extravagance which has been recently demonstrated?

[Mr. Lang.]

● (1440)

[Translation]

Hon. Jean Chrétien (President of the Treasury Board): Mr. Speaker, we hope to table the bill concerning the Auditor General as part of the next Speech from the Throne and thus proceed with the legislation as early as next spring. We considered the Wilson report and most of the recommendations are acceptable. We are considering the Auditor General's report and the hon. member will understand that it takes a few weeks to go through such a complex, although well prepared, document as the one submitted by the Auditor General. The federal government certainly intends to proceed as soon as possible with both aspects of this problem.

[English]

Mr. Baldwin: A supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. In light of the fact that there has already been a period of gestation of seven months in connection with this report of the independent review committee, if the government fears to move because of bureaucratic apprehension will it at least refer this matter to the Standing Committee on Public Accounts under the able chairmanship of a member of this House?

Mr. Chrétien: Mr. Speaker, it is because we want to proceed as quickly as possible that we have decided to proceed with the bill and the bill will be ready. If we were to proceed the way the hon. member is suggesting, I am sure we would still be debating the matter in committee. Now that the government has made the decision about 95 per cent of the problems suggested by the hon. member will be taken care of.

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TRANSPORT

MEASURES TO EXPEDITE PROCEDURE FOR DEALING WITH GRADE SEPARATION APPLICATIONS

Mr. Andrew Brewin (Greenwood): Mr. Speaker, my question for the Minister of Transport is supplementary to a question asked by the hon. member for Scarborough East. What steps is the minister taking to expedite the procedure for grade separation of hazardous crossings?

Hon. Otto E. Lang (Minister of Transport): Mr. Speaker, I think I indicated that, with regard to this specific crossing, the application went through the usual process and a recommendation was on its way to me. That is the normal procedure when there are almost always more applications than there are funds available.

Mr. Brewin: A supplementary. As the normal proceeding seems to have taken over ten months and produced no results, is the minister considering some further method of expediting these proceedings?

Mr. Lang: Mr. Speaker, I indicated that the examination of the application was at the point where a recommendation on it was now available. It is of course a matter of choosing between applications where funds are limited and not available for all purposes to which they might be