

INDUSTRY

IMPROVEMENTS IN SAINT JOHN HARBOUR DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Bob Corbett (Fundy-Royal): Madam Speaker, I should like to address my question to the Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce. Since the government has abandoned the exciting new programs for Atlantic Canada which were in place before the last election, in the same way that they have abandoned the entire Atlantic region, I should like to ask the minister when he is going to implement a program to replace the fishing fleet; and what will it be?

How can he justify his and his government's neglect of the Saint John harbour development and the Saint John dry dock? In other words, when is he and his government going to stop raping Atlantic Canada without so much as a squeeze, let alone a kiss?

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Hon. Herb Gray (Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce): I should ask the hon. member a question as to who does his writing, so that I will avoid using the same person.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Gray: The only programs we have abandoned for Atlantic Canada are programs like the 18 cents a gallon gas tax.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Gray: That tax would have driven the Atlantic economy into the ground. That step alone has provided the basis for a healthy and progressive move forward of the Atlantic economy.

● (1450)

We are working on the kinds of programs which will encourage further progress for Atlantic Canada, including programs for the fishing industry and the area of Saint John, New Brunswick.

Mr. Corbett: Madam Speaker, we did not receive so much as a kiss: apparently not even so much as a smooch.

An hon. Member: Just a kiss-off.

Mr. Corbett: Under the previous administration we met with the Atlantic premiers to have their input. Has the minister asked the Atlantic premiers to meet collectively with him or his colleague, the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance; and, if not, why not?

Mr. Gray: Madam Speaker, my officials are in regular contact with their equivalents in provincial government departments; and in terms of regular contact with the Atlantic provinces, we have outstanding members of Parliament and outstanding ministers from there to provide the necessary input.

Oral Questions

ADMINISTRATION OF JUSTICE

INQUIRY INTO ALLEGED PRICE-FIXING BY MAJOR OIL COMPANIES—TABLING OF REPORT

Mr. Svend J. Robinson (Burnaby): Madam Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Justice and Minister of State for Social Development, if I can have his attention for just a moment.

My question concerns the seven-year inquiry into alleged price-fixing by the major oil companies in Canada—an alleged multimillion dollar rip-off of Canadian consumers. Well over a year ago, the director of investigation and research for Consumer Affairs asked the Justice Ministry to provide certain legal advice on the mass of evidence that has been accumulated in this particular case for possible prosecution.

The Justice Ministry went through a whole series of lawyers, and Consumer Affairs is now getting fed-up and is insisting upon action by the Ministry of Justice. My question for the Minister of Justice is this: first of all, I understand that Consumer Affairs have now exhausted their patience and are demanding a report by the end of this month on the matter. Is Justice prepared to make this report at the end of the month; and, secondly, what is the reason for the lengthy delay in this investigation of interest to all Canadian consumers?

[Translation]

Hon. Jean Chrétien (Minister of Justice and Minister of State for Social Development): Madam Speaker, it is true that the director of investigations, Mr. Bertrand, asked the Minister of Justice in April of last year to appoint attorneys to study the file. Unfortunately, there have been delays and the attorneys were appointed only on November 13. Since then, one of them was able to make his report; the other one should be completed before the end of the month and if not, the director concerned will continue his investigation with the means at his disposal.

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[English]

CONSUMER AFFAIRS

REFERENCE OF ALLEGATION OF PRICE-FIXING BY OIL COMPANIES TO RESTRICTIVE TRADE PRACTICES COMMISSION

Mr. Ray Skelly (Comox-Powell River): Madam Speaker, my supplementary question is for the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs and Postmaster General. It follows along the same lines the Minister of Justice has just presented.

This long delay is completely unacceptable. I should like to ask the minister if he would make the information public again. We have spent six long years on this. Will he also give us his assurance that he will refer this question to the Restrictive Trade Practices Commission? If he is not prepared to do that, would he explain to the House why we should pass his estimates in committee, estimates which are being considered this afternoon, if we are not going to get action in respect of the taxpayers' dollars on this question and on many other