

Oral Questions

CUTBACK IN CMHC ESTIMATES

Mr. Lincoln M. Alexander (Hamilton West): Mr. Speaker, I would like to direct a supplementary question to the President of the Treasury Board.

In August of this year, the President of the Treasury Board indicated that the government would be cutting about \$500 million in its expenses. Now there is a very striking feature in Supplementary Estimates (A) in terms of \$368 million being used in terms of cuts by CMHC which, in effect, I think leaves no room for any other department and in fact it shows no restraint in terms of government operating expenditures.

How can the President of the Treasury Board indicate that there has been some cut which would leave room for other governments when here you have one department alone which has an illusory cut of some \$368 million?

Hon. Robert K. Andras (President of the Treasury Board): Mr. Speaker, I think there is a contradiction in the hon. member's question. On the one hand he talks about cuts being detrimental to other levels of governments, and then says it is an illusory cut. You cannot have it both ways. In fact, Mr. Speaker, for the details of the reductions in the Ministry of Urban Affairs or Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation, I ask the hon. member to pursue those details with the appropriate minister.

I can say that, generally speaking, those reductions on the capital side of CMHC were done after consultation with the provinces; and the hon. member will note that there is a possibility of giving more subsidy to certain programs, such as public housing and that sort of thing. But we think the provinces can share with us the burden of raising money for the capital cost of their housing programs.

Mr. Alexander: Mr. Speaker, the reason why I used the word "illusory" is that it is my opinion that the \$368 million referred to by CMHC should have lapsed and is really not a reduction in supplementary estimates. In other words, there is more flim-flam and more manipulation by Crown corporations.

The minister has undertaken to introduce an omnibus Crown corporations bill in order to bring about some control, direction and accountability with respect to Crown corporations. Seeing that there is manipulation by these Crown corporations, which the government is feeding on, can he give us some indication of where this omnibus Crown corporation bill is that means so much to not only the government but to the people of Canada?

Mr. Andras: Mr. Speaker, I challenge the hon. member to explain his "flimflam" when he talks about manipulation by the Crown corporations. That is a serious allegation. I suggest he back up his flimflam with some precise statements of where this comes from.

[Mr. Andras.]

Mr. Alexander: Answer my question.

● (1422)

Mr. Andras: As to the illusory question under which he cloaked that preamble, the Crown corporations bill will be coming before the House in due course.

Mr. Alexander: You promised the people of Canada this Crown corporations bill, and it is time you brought it in. You are flim-flamming the Canadian people.

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TRANSPORT

SHIPPING OF CARGO TO FROBISHER BAY, N.W.T.

Mr. Edward Broadbent (Oshawa-Whitby): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Transport. It pertains to the failure of the St. John's vessel, appropriately named the *Crosbie*, to unload all its cargo in Frobisher Bay and the resulting hardships that have been inflicted upon the people in that area. The minister knows that it is a serious matter.

Considering that the minister said in the House last week that discussions were under way as to how this cargo was eventually going to be delivered to the people in Frobisher Bay, is he now in a position to report to the House? In addition, is he in a position to assure the House that the additional costs which will have to be borne as a result of this will not be inflicted upon the people of the Frobisher Bay area?

Hon. Otto E. Lang (Minister of Transport and Minister of Justice): Mr. Speaker, I would only say at this time that the vessel was putting into Montreal. At that point, the cargo was going to be assessed in its various categories and also in terms of its essential nature and its immediate movement. The broad assessment of this is being handled essentially by the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development and the government of the Northwest Territories. I will see if my colleague has anything to report to the House at this point in time.

Mr. Broadbent: Mr. Speaker, I have just been informed by the officials of the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development that the government is at this moment in the process of opening crates in Montreal, making arbitrary decisions between essential and non-essential items, presumably on the ground that some will be shipped and some will not. The people in the north will have to pay for those items that are not shipped, to be shipped again.

Since the people in the north are dependent upon these shipments once or twice a year and have ordered in good faith, I would like an assurance from the minister that the government will not make such a distinction and all the goods ordered by the people in that northern region will be delivered. Will the government offer assurance that no distinction will be made between essential and non-essential items, because while