

Oral Questions

this latest Tory scandal at the Canadian Forces radar base in Moisie, Québec.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I have said repeatedly that it is the duty of the Chair not only to make sure that the Opposition has the right to ask questions but that, in the general interests of decorum in this place and in fairness to others, those questions must be asked carefully.

At the moment there are vigorous questions being asked about something and I am asking Hon. Members not to use words in the preamble that take the questions way beyond at least what we have heard so far in the Chamber, and attribute a lot of conclusions, to what we have heard. The Hon. Member will ask his question. I ask him to be careful.

Mr. Rodriguez: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I will take your admonition very seriously and I will rephrase my question.

My question is directed to the Minister of Public Works and has to do with certain alleged land sales raised previously today in this House.

The Minister of Public Works said that he received the letter from Mr. Hylands sometime in August. He also said that there was nothing in the letter that would lead him to consider turning it over to the RCMP. Is the Minister now prepared to make this letter public, if it is so innocuous, so that all Members of Parliament and the Canadian public can judge whether or not he made the right decision?

Hon. Stewart McInnes (Minister of Public Works): Mr. Speaker, that Member and other Members are alleging that there is fraud, that there is scam, that there is incriminating evidence. It seems to me that they cannot have it both ways. If there are those things then they are the subject of an RCMP investigation and we should let the investigation proceed and conclude. I will then be happy to answer all the Hon. Member's questions.

REQUEST THAT MINISTER TABLE LETTER

Mr. John R. Rodriguez (Nickel Belt): Mr. Speaker, far be it from me to make a suggestion to this Conservative Cabinet Minister as to how he could slay the Opposition in one fell swoop. He could put all of this to rest by simply tabling the letter.

Will the Minister do what is right, will he do what is fair, will he do what is demanded to clear up the so-called rumours and innuendoes of the Opposition? Will he table the letter in this House so that we can decide whether he made the right decision or not?

Hon. Stewart McInnes (Minister of Public Works): Mr. Speaker, it seems to me that I have done a little better than turning it over to the House. I have turned it over to the RCMP. Let them complete their investigation.

TRANSPORT

TRANSPORT ROUTE CANADA—PAYMENT OF GASOLINE BILLS

Mr. Russell MacLellan (Cape Breton—The Sydneys): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Transport. On September 12, Route Canada ceased operations. Yet in July of this year its revenues were \$10,747,729. In August of this year, just days before it ceased operations, its revenues were \$6,961,012, yet it stopped operations. During that period of time it did not pay its bills yet it was able to get gas. It was able to get gas because, as the invoices of Ten Wheels Truck Plaza in Kingston, Ontario, show, the gas bills were sent to CN.

● (1500)

Will the Minister confirm that Canadian National paid for the gasoline of Transport Route Canada during the period it was making millions of dollars but not paying its bills? Why would CN pay the gas of a company it sold two years ago, which was going to buy an American trucking company, put the Canadian trucking company out of business and lay off over 2,500 employees?

Hon. Benoît Bouchard (Minister of Transport): Mr. Speaker, I stated repeatedly last week that the Minister of Transport does not have the power to look into the operations of Route Canada as a private company. My hon. friend brings forward some information today about the payment of gas bills by Canadian National. It may or may not be true. It is the first time I have heard it. I hope that he will give me the time to check with Canadian National to see if it was done, and, if so, if there is any good reason for it. I will come back to him with more information as soon as I have it.

COMPANY'S REVENUES—REQUEST FOR PUBLIC INVESTIGATION

Mr. Russell MacLellan (Cape Breton—The Sydneys): Mr. Speaker, in July and August, Transport Route Canada made millions of dollars. Where did that money go?

Will the Minister table all of the agreements between CN and the Government of Canada on the one hand, and Transport Route Canada on the other? Will the Minister initiate a public investigation into this company? Millions of dollars were taken in, yet no bills were paid. Thousands of workers are laid off and are owed thousands of dollars. Will the Minister initiate an investigation?

Hon. Benoît Bouchard (Minister of Transport): Mr. Speaker, I repeat what I said last week. I met the truckers myself. The Department of Labour and the Department of Finance have worked on their side in terms of all the operations of the company. But it is not yet in bankruptcy or even receivership. I repeat for the tenth or fifteenth time that, as long as there is no official declaration of that kind, we cannot get into the operations of the company.

The Hon. Member says that it does not pay its people but makes profits. Again, it is a private sector operation. If there is