

OIL

INQUIRY AS TO REVOKING OF DRILLING PERMITS FOR
BRITISH COLUMBIA COASTAL WATERS

Mr. T. C. Douglas (Nanaimo-Cowichan-The Islands): Mr. Speaker, may I direct a question to the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources. Has his department issued oil drilling permits to Petrotar Development Company Limited of Calgary, and have these oil drilling permits been revoked and withdrawn?

Hon. Donald S. Macdonald (Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources): Mr. Speaker, I think the hon. member is referring to the west coast permits. They were permits for seismic investigation rather than for drilling, as I understand it.

Mr. Douglas: Have those permits covering some 2.7 million acres of the coastal waters of British Columbia been revoked and withdrawn, and are any other permits outstanding for either seismographic work or drilling? If there are any outstanding, will they be withdrawn?

Mr. Macdonald (Rosedale): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is asking for a really detailed enunciation of the outstanding permits on the west coast. Perhaps the best thing to do would be to get those in tabular form and supply them to the hon. member. I cannot do this from memory.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. I will recognize the hon. member for a last supplementary question, but we should try to limit the number of supplementaries asked. If each hon. member asks two or three supplementaries, we will run short of time. I will try to recognize as many of our colleagues as possible during the question period.

Mr. Douglas: Mr. Speaker, I am not asking the minister for detailed information. I am asking about permits which were issued by his department and which the Minister of the Environment said were going to be revoked. I am asking the minister a simple question. Have the permits issued to Petrotar Development Company Limited been revoked and does the department intend to revoke any other outstanding permits?

Mr. Macdonald (Rosedale): Mr. Speaker, I think that my previous answer still makes sense. A great many permits have been issued on the west coast, as I indicated to the hon. member. I will be glad to get a full description of their current status for him. I think that is the information he wants, according to my understanding.

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AUDITOR GENERAL

REASON FOR DELAY IN TABLING OF REPORT

Hon. Robert L. Stanfield (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Prime Minister who undertook on Monday, I believe, to investigate why the report of the Auditor General had not been tabled in the House within the time required by law. Has the Prime

Inquiries of the Ministry

Minister been able to conduct this investigation, and what brief report can he make now?

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, I did make that inquiry and I understand that the Auditor General himself has failed to deliver the report to the minister for tabling in parliament—

Mr. Forrestall: Why?

Mr. Trudeau: —under the provision that the law provides.

Mr. Forrestall: Why?

Mr. Trudeau: The hon. member asks why. I am sure, if an officer of parliament is breaking the law, that an hon. member should not ask me why he is breaking the law. He should address his question to that officer of parliament.

Mr. Forrestall: He has been given some help in breaking the law.

Mr. Stanfield: Mr. Speaker, will the Prime Minister give the House the undertaking he will make certain that the Auditor General has sufficient resources to complete this report and that it will be tabled before the next general election?

Mr. Hees: Don't be afraid, Pierre. Speak!

Mr. Trudeau: Mr. Speaker—I am suddenly afraid.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Hon. D. S. Harkness (Calgary Centre): Mr. Speaker, in the investigation of this matter which the Prime Minister assured me on Monday would be undertaken, did he discover that the reasons given by the Auditor General for the lateness in tabling the report are a shortage of staff and poor morale because of low classifications of his officials?

Mr. Trudeau: Mr. Speaker, I repeat, the Auditor General is an official of parliament and not of the government. I do not want to question the reasons he gave. If parliament wants to condone his breaking the law and not do anything about it, that is fine—

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Trudeau: —but the government is not stepping into this matter.

Mr. Forrestall: Shame!

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. I must bring to the attention of hon. members that some 20 or 25 hon. members want to ask questions. We must make headway. Again I bring to the attention of hon. members that the question period will be over soon. It will end at about five minutes past three.

• (1450)

Mr. Harkness: I wonder whether the Prime Minister would look further into this matter and ensure that the Auditor General has sufficient staff of the necessary high