

Oral Questions

question that he is asking. If he would examine the facts he would see that we are proceeding with the utmost care to ensure the safety of the travelling public. One of the important steps in that direction was to have a discussion with the management of Air Canada to determine what steps they have taken in terms of their own authority, and at the same time to come to an agreement to go ahead with a public examination of the Gimli incident. That is exactly what the Hon. Member has said should be done and in fact that is what we are doing. However, we must follow the proper procedures, acquire the proper person, and develop terms of reference which must be approved by Cabinet. If the Hon. Member is not aware of those basic preliminary steps, then he should go back to school for a primer course.

Mr. Domm: Madam Speaker, I would suggest that the Minister review his own statements about the public inquiry. After eight weeks of questioning in the House, we had not been assured of a public inquiry until just now.

DISCIPLINING OF EMPLOYEES—REQUEST FOR POSTPONEMENT

Mr. Bill Domm (Peterborough): Madam Speaker, my second question is also directed to the Minister. Would he agree to a stay of execution for five employees of Air Canada until such time as the public investigation takes place? Why is the Minister prejudging five employees of a Crown corporation, using information wrongly supplied to him by the President of Air Canada?

Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Minister of Transport): Madam Speaker, if anyone in the House is guilty of prejudging it is the Hon. Member who in his statements and questions has made a number of assertions concerning the actions taken by the management of Air Canada, without knowing whether they are correct or not. That, Madam Speaker, is the height of irresponsibility for a Member of Parliament.

We are proceeding as we should by asking for an open public examination, and that examination will reveal all of the relevant and pertinent facts. I would expect that the Hon. Member would wait for that open examination without going ahead with the kind of witch burning that he is engaged in this afternoon.

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THE ARTS

TAX DEPARTMENT'S TREATMENT OF WEST COAST ARTIST

Hon. John A. Fraser (Vancouver South): Madam Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Communications. The Minister will of course know that a very prominent Canadian artist from the West coast will be burning a number of his art works on Thursday morning rather than be forced to pay income tax on art works that are not yet sold. He is doing this as a consequence of a long period of harassment by tax officials of this particular artist and of artists in general. I

would ask the Minister if he has done anything to intervene with his Cabinet colleagues in order to put a stop to this shameful situation and save this Canadian art, or if he expects to sit there while the art burns.

Hon. Francis Fox (Minister of Communications): Madam Speaker, as the Hon. Member knows, the question he is raising at the moment is essentially a tax matter and should be directed to my colleague, the Minister of National Revenue. As Minister of Communications I personally have indicated, time and time again, our interest in seeing that people in the cultural and artistic community are dealt with as fairly as are other Canadians under the tax Act. I have already drawn this case to the attention of the Minister of National Revenue and I am told that he is examining the real facts of the case.

Mr. Fraser: Madam Speaker, for a Minister whose responsibilities include defending and advancing the causes of artists, that answer is a cop-out.

REQUEST FOR MINISTERIAL ACTION

Hon. John A. Fraser (Vancouver South): Madam Speaker, on Thursday morning that artist will burn his art works unless something is done. As recently as September 23, 1983, the Minister received a copy of a long letter from representatives of Canadian artists. That letter described this situation and asked for a moratorium on harassment until the tax laws dealing with artists can be re-examined. Is the Minister prepared to stand in the House today and say that that will be done and that this shameful situation will be put right? If not, we will become the laughing stock of the art community.

Hon. Francis Fox (Minister of Communications): Madam Speaker, I know that the Hon. Member very much enjoys playing games in Parliament, and he very much enjoys the charade he has just put on. He knows full well that this is a matter that falls under the jurisdiction of my colleague, the Minister of National Revenue. He also knows full well that these questions must be handled directly by the Minister of National Revenue. I have clearly indicated to the Hon. Member, in response to his first question, that I had already brought the matter to the attention of the Minister of National Revenue. I have done so, and I will continue to pursue the matter with the Minister of National Revenue. To take the attitude taken by the Hon. Member is to play a charade in an attempt to score a few political points.

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ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS

PROPOSED SASKATCHEWAN WATER AND SEWAGE PROJECTS

Mr. Bill McKnight (Kindersley-Lloydminster): Madam Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of the Environment. He, on behalf of his Government, has entered into agreements under the Special Recovery Program with the Regional Municipality of Sudbury, the Regional Municipality