

Oral Questions

in opposing the development of the Garrison Diversion in a way that would have an adverse impact on Canadian waters or fisheries. That will not happen as a result of the funds that have been added to the project.

Mr. McKenzie: I hope the Minister will consider another representation to Washington.

REPORTED STATEMENTS MADE BY NORTH DAKOTA OFFICIAL

Mr. Dan McKenzie (Winnipeg-Assiniboine): Madam Speaker, the Attorney General of North Dakota has stated that the Garrison Diversion Project will not be stopped by the Canadian Government and that the recommendations of the International Joint Commission will be ignored. Has the Minister made representations to the Government of North Dakota to protest these outrageous statements?

● (1440)

Hon. Allan J. MacEachen (Deputy Prime Minister and Secretary of State for External Affairs): Madam Speaker, I have not considered protesting these statements which I would regard as unacceptable, as the Hon. Member does.

I think it is important to bear in mind that the new Bill to which he has referred includes a very definite stipulation that none of the funds can be used for the construction of project features affecting waters flowing into Canada. That really looks after the concern of the Hon. Member, at least at this point, and the concern of the Canadian Government. We would have been much happier if the funds had not been reappropriated, but there is a provision that provides they will not be used in the way I have described.

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PENSIONS

REQUEST THAT GOVERNMENT WITHDRAW BILL C-131

Mr. Les Benjamin (Regina West): Madam Speaker, thank you for recognizing me. Due to the kindness and thoughtfulness of my colleagues in my caucus who thought I should ask two important questions today—

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Hnatyshyn: At least it will be for the first time.

Madam Speaker: Order. The Hon. Member has been recognized for the purpose of asking a question. I wish he would proceed.

Mr. Benjamin: I just wanted to make sure you could hear me. It is also because my mother is in the Gallery today, on her 78th birthday.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Benjamin: In the absence of the Minister of National Health and Welfare I direct my question to the Prime Minister. I would like to know, 2.4 million Canadian pensioners would like to know, and my mother would like to know why he is going to reduce the increase in her Old Age Pension, and would he give an undertaking to the House that he will ask his Cabinet colleagues to reconsider, repent and relent, and withdraw Bill C-131?

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Madam Speaker, I am sure the Hon. Member would want his mother to know the truth about this Bill.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Trudeau: It is reassuring that he would ask the Government to speak the truth so that his mother can understand it. I want to point out to the Hon. Member that there is no intention of reducing the Old Age Pension.

Mr. Benjamin: Reducing the increase.

Mr. Trudeau: On the contrary it will continue—yes, those were the words which the Hon. Member used. The Government will continue to increase the Old Age Pension. We intend seeing it increased by a rate of 6 per cent in 1983 and 5 per cent in 1984 and since we hope that inflation will be at 6 per cent or below in 1983 and at 5 per cent in 1984, hopefully, with the co-operation of all Members and of the provincial Governments, we will be able to establish a 6 per cent rate of inflation, in which case the old age pensioners will be reimbursed for the exact amount of CPI.

POSITION OF WIDOWS OF RAILWAY PENSIONERS

Mr. Les Benjamin (Regina West): Madam Speaker, a minor correction to the Prime Minister—I said a reduction in the increase of the pensions.

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Benjamin: My supplementary is directed to the Minister of Transport. I would like to know, and thousands of railway pensioners would like to know, and my mother, a widow of a railway pensioner, would like to know, whether or not he will prevent the railways from cutting off widows' pensions at age 70 and cancelling their railway passes.

Hon. Jean-Luc Pepin (Minister of Transport): Madam Speaker, I am quite sure that the Hon. Member's mother is a very intelligent person and also that she negotiated very hard, either herself or her representative, with CP on those pension terms. I might meet her afterwards to get to know more about the actual agreement that exists between CP and herself, her group of employees. All this is to say that the Government does not tell CP what pensions to give. This is the result of a collective agreement, I presume, and consequently we have no right to intervene in these matters and force CP to pay more or pay less.