

APPLICATION OF REGULATIONS

Hon. Edward Broadbent (Oshawa): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the same Minister. According to the Auditor General's Report, it was in July, 1985, that the Cabinet reviewed the project and directed that funds be restricted to the Canada-Alberta tourism agreement. That entailed, according to the Department's regulations, provincial participation. The provincial Government had declined to participate and reached the decision, so we are told elsewhere, that the project was going to go ahead anyway.

Notwithstanding what the Minister has just told the House, isn't the decision taken by the then Acting Minister quite inconsistent with the regulations laid down in the Department as they affect tourist projects and two other principal criteria which the Department itself laid down? Isn't the decision that was taken inconsistent with the rules?

Hon. Robert de Cotret (Minister of Regional Industrial Expansion and Minister of State for Science and Technology): Not at all, Mr. Speaker. I think those allegations are totally false. It was well within the IRDP guidelines.

At the time the initial application was made in 1983 economic conditions were such that the Department felt the project was not eligible because the need for the funds had not been proved. When the application was finally approved, the need for the funds was clear. I have noted one of our top officials in the province saying that the money was needed to complete the project, a project that now provides 15,000 jobs in the Edmonton area. As a result, \$200 million of tourist money is being spent in Edmonton alone and an awful lot of secondary economic benefits for Alberta and the west have accrued.

DEPARTMENTAL RULES

Hon. Edward Broadbent (Oshawa): Mr. Speaker, the Minister said 1983. When the decision was originally made in 1983, the Minister says, economic circumstances were quite different. But the report, if the Minister will read it, does not refer to a Cabinet decision made in 1983. The criticism is made about one made in 1985, two years later. According to the Auditor General, it is at that time that the decision inconsistent within the rules was reached.

Since the Prime Minister is responsible for the over-all performance of Ministers acting consistently with the rules, is he in agreement that Ministers should follow the rules laid down in their own Departments, or are they free to break the rules if they think there is some short run political advantage to be gained?

Hon. Robert de Cotret (Minister of Regional Industrial Expansion and Minister of State for Science and Technology): Mr. Speaker, first, I would like the Hon. Leader of the New Democratic Party to recognize that no rules were bent.

Oral Questions

Some Hon. Members: You broke them.

Mr. de Cotret: We followed a very rigid process as we do in every case. When one talks about political advantage, I talk about economic advantage, social advantage, and building in Alberta a tourist attraction that is second only to Disneyland in California in drawing one million tourists. This attraction, with slightly less than one million tourists, brings great benefits to the whole region and province.

GOVERNMENT POSITION

Hon. Edward Broadbent (Oshawa): Mr. Speaker, we are talking about a project according to the Auditor General, not Members on the opposition side, that had been rejected by the provincial Government, was inconsistent with the rules of the Minister's own Department and would have been proceeded with anyway. The Government in flagrant disregard of its own rules went ahead and made a \$5 million grant.

Is the present Government of Canada saying that it will keep the rules only when they are convenient, otherwise they will be broken? Is that it?

Hon. Robert de Cotret (Minister of Regional Industrial Expansion and Minister of State for Science and Technology): Mr. Speaker, the Hon. Member does not seem to understand that this decision was not inconsistent with the rules at all.

In 1983 it was believed that the project would go ahead without federal assistance. At that point the decision was held in abeyance. In 1985, and I quoted a senior official as saying it, in the best judgment of the Department at that point the project could not be completed without federal assistance.

I cannot understand what the Hon. Member opposite has against this Government's desire to create 15,000 jobs at a cost of only \$5 million. Is that not in the interests of western Canada and in the interests of Alberta?

ELIGIBILITY OF PROJECT FOR FUNDING

Mr. John Nunziata (York South—Weston): Mr. Speaker, my question is on the same subject. It is directed to the Prime Minister in view of his concerns about morality in government. No matter how you cut it, this payment to Triple Five Corporation was immoral.

Mr. Speaker: I am not quite sure where the Hon. Member's suggestions or otherwise are leading.

An Hon. Member: To the gutter.

Mr. Speaker: I would indicate that the preamble perhaps should stick to facts or alleged facts and not become too argumentative. I also point out that it is improper to accuse a Minister of immorality or other things. I would ask the co-operation of the Hon. Member.