

Oral Questions

government still hold this view? If so, when will such legislation be forthcoming?

Hon. Jack H. Horner (Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce): Mr. Speaker, the government still holds that view; and it will be forthcoming soon, in this session. In fact, I hope to have that included in a piece of legislation that will be put before the House later.

CHARGES LAID UNDER SECTION 29 OF THE STATISTICS ACT

Mr. Bob Wenman (Fraser Valley West): Mr. Speaker, recently in a test case the Crown unsuccessfully prosecuted one of my constituents for violating section 29 of the Statistics Act. It is now further persecuting my constituent by appealing that very just decision of the courts.

Will the minister advise, or recommend to the Crown attorneys prosecuting Canadians accused of section 29 violations to enter a stay of proceedings or drop the charges until the strict compliance issue is resolved?

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. I do not think the hon. member expects us to use the question period as a time for representations of that sort.

Miss Flora MacDonald (Kingston and the Islands): Mr. Speaker, in view of the minister's response would he consider, if he has not already done so, implementing the provisions of private member's bill C-452 that I have before the House? This would amend the Statistics Act by removing the penalty provisions in section 29 which can be imposed against Canadians who refuse to answer questions on Statistics Canada surveys. I claim no pride of ownership; I will be glad to share that idea with the minister.

Hon. Jack H. Horner (Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce): Mr. Speaker, I would like to assure the hon. member that Statistics Canada has a very important purpose to serve in our country. Its statistics are widely used by many facets of Canadian industry. They are taken and collected under the strictest and most confidential methods possible.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

An hon. Member: Just like the income tax.

Mr. Horner: The other point I want to make is this: Statistics Canada is an independent body. It does not answer to the wishes, particularly of a political person, at any time. It wants to make an accurate study of the economic facts in Canada. If hon. members would like, I will send them a copy of this booklet put out by Statistics Canada, called "Doorstep Diplomacy"—

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Horner: —in which the guidelines are clearly outlined. There are eight guidelines, and I would like to read one.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

[Mr. Wenman.]

An hon. Member: Scare us.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

Miss MacDonald: I appreciate the minister's lengthy explanation, but it was not in response to the question I posed. I would like to ask if he will, indeed, do something about the penalty provisions in section 29 of the Statistics Act, which only House of Commons parliamentary procedures can change, so that people who do not feel they should answer these surveys do not have fines or the penalty of imprisonment imposed on them. That is the question.

An hon. Member: Right on.

Mr. Horner: Mr. Speaker, one thing that I have noticed after a lengthy parliamentary career—

An hon. Member: It will soon be over, Jack.

Mr. Horner: —is that Statistics Canada is being taken and accepted by people of Canada as if it were the Bible.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Horner: If Statistics Canada print a figure, everybody believes it must be accurate. Everybody accepts the fact that it is accurate beyond a shadow of a doubt.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Horner: The hon. member's suggestion might seriously erode the ability of Statistics Canada to maintain the level of accuracy for which it has become so highly respected.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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ENERGY

POWERS OF MARITIME ENERGY CORPORATION

Mr. Maurice A. Dionne (Northumberland-Miramichi): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources. I would like to congratulate him on his signing of the Maritime Energy Corporation agreement with the maritime provinces.

Mr. Crosbie: Author?

Mr. Hnatyshyn: We did not know you could read.

Mr. Dionne (Northumberland-Miramichi): The opposition judges others by themselves.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. Does the hon. member have a question?

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!