

Oral Questions

which has been applied to some of the assessments throughout the senior executive group. Certainly, we are conscious of this and are inclined to agree it has been a bit extravagant. We have taken steps to alert all the people involved in such assessments. Their standards must be more rigorously applied and indeed we would expect to see a more credible group of assessments of those people.

On the second point concerning the accountability of senior executives of the Public Service, as the hon. member knows, we are examining that area very carefully. Indeed, it will be a very fundamental part of the Royal Commission on Financial Management and Accountability which is undertaking that analysis now.

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EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

UNITED NATIONS SUGAR CONFERENCE—REASON CANADA
INSISTING SUGAR STOCKS BE PAID FOR BY PRODUCING
NATIONS

Mr. David MacDonald (Egmont): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Acting Prime Minister on a matter in which I am sure he is most interested. It concerns the ninth United Nations Sugar Conference rapidly coming to conclusion in Geneva. In view of reports that hopes for an agreement at this conference are fading, despite the fact the Secretary General of UNCTAD (Gamini Corea) sees an earlier agreement on sugar stabilization as a major test of the sincerity of the support expressed for a common fund by Canada and the other six industrialized nations at the recent London summit, will the minister indicate why Canada is insisting that all sugar stocks be paid for solely by producing nations—a position which runs contrary to what we agreed under the Tin Commodity Agreement?

Hon. Allan J. MacEachen (Acting Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, I will have to check into that particular situation and provide the information later to the hon. member.

UNITED NATIONS SUGAR CONFERENCE—COMPOSITION OF
CANADIAN DELEGATION

Mr. David MacDonald (Egmont): Mr. Speaker, while the minister is checking into that aspect of the negotiations, I wonder whether he would also provide to the House some indication as to the composition of the delegation. In view of the implications for the Canadian consumers, could he indicate whether there is a full representation, not only from the major sugar companies, but from consumer groups as well as direct agricultural interests which surely must be important to a balanced delegation on this subject?

Hon. Allan J. MacEachen (Acting Prime Minister): Yes, Mr. Speaker, I will also do that.

[Mr. Andras.]

[Translation]

AIRPORTS

PROPOSED CONSTRUCTION OF FACILITIES IN NORTHWEST NEW
BRUNSWICK—GOVERNMENT POSITION

Mr. Eymard Corbin (Madawaska-Victoria): Mr. Speaker, during the oral question period on the eve of the last sitting day before Christmas, I asked the Minister of Transport whether he had made up his mind about building an airport in St. Léonard, in northwest New Brunswick, and the minister replied that I had done enough already and that no further action on my part was needed. In spite of that, I have been fairly active, Mr. Speaker, and I now want to ask the Minister of Transport whether the cabinet has made its final decision in connection with the construction of airport facilities in the Atlantic provinces, including St. Léonard, and what are the odds on the construction work starting before the first snow?

[English]

Hon. Otto E. Lang (Minister of Transport): Mr. Speaker, the matter is progressing favourably although the final and detailed decisions have not been taken into consideration completely. I expect, however, to have more news for the hon. member within the next three weeks.

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GOVERNMENT ADMINISTRATION

GOVERNMENT SECRECY—FREEDOM OF PUBLIC SERVANTS TO
MAKE COMMENTS

Mr. G. W. Baldwin (Peace River): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Acting Prime Minister which is related to the very searching and intelligent question asked by the learned and hon. member for Grenville-Carleton. It deals with some statements made by Mr. Gordon Robertson to a parliamentary committee dealing with secrecy in government. Some of us in that committee have laboured under the impression the government was secretive because they wanted to hide mistakes, bad judgment and improper instructions given by deputy ministers to their ministers. Mr. Gordon Robertson said, however, that the purpose of secrecy in government was to permit public servants to be open-handed and anonymous. He was supported in that by the hon. member for Eglinton. Has the government now rejected that position, and will public servants now be allowed to be more open and free in the comments they make?

Hon. Allan J. MacEachen (Acting Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, that has always been the position of the government.