

Oral Questions

Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Minister of Transport): Mr. Speaker, the directive is part of the general program of the Government to apply the Affirmative Action Program in all Departments. It is based upon the trial experiments which were previously undertaken over a two-year period in three Departments. We are simply fulfilling the requirements and obligations under that general Affirmative Action Program, but doing so in a very enthusiastic spirit, because I believe it is one of the most important and necessary initiatives which we can take to ensure equality in the work place.

REQUEST FOR INCLUSION OF ALL VISIBLE MINORITIES

Mr. Laverne Lewycky (Dauphin-Swan River): Mr. Speaker, my supplementary question is directed to the same Minister. Would he indicate what type of consideration he is prepared to give within his own Department to include all visible minorities in the work place analysis which he will be doing this year, with the intention of including all visible minorities in that Affirmative Action Program within the Department?

Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Minister of Transport): Mr. Speaker, that might be a question which is better directed to the President of the Treasury Board who has the over-all responsibility for the application of the program. It is my understanding that visible minorities are part of the affirmative action targets. They would be included in both the analysis and in the direction. I would like to point out that, in terms of my own Department, we have initiated special programs for recruitment and training in areas such as northern Canada, and other remote areas, to ensure that local populations are being given an opportunity to break down some of the barriers which previously prevented them from getting employment in our Public Service.

* * *

ENERGY

ESTABLISHMENT OF ELECTROCHEMICAL INSTITUTE IN SHAWINIGAN, P.Q.

Mr. G. M. Gurbin (Bruce-Grey): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Finance, if I can get his attention. In a letter in 1981 to the Minister of Finance, who was then the federal Minister of Energy, the Ontario Minister of Energy requested assistance from the federal Government to establish an institute for hydrogen and electrochemical systems. Following an initial period of co-operation, the National Research Council was directed to proceed with a plan which resulted in the establishment of an electrochemical institute in Shawinigan, Quebec, on January 20, 1984.

Would the Minister of Energy now admit that he blackballed the Ontario initiative and that he deliberately misled the House, when on December 9—

Mr. Speaker: Order. It is unparliamentary to allege that an Hon. Member has deliberately misled the House. Would the Hon. Member phrase his question differently?

Mr. Gurbin: Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the Minister if he will deny having misled the House on December 9, 1981, when he denied having directed the National Research Council to establish the Shawinigan institute?

Hon. Jean Chrétien (Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources): As Minister of Energy, Mr. Speaker, I would like to reply to the Hon. Member's question. There were no funds available for such a development in the National Research Council and funds were made available from the La Prade area. In 1978 there was a cancellation of the La Prade heavy water plant. There was a fund established for the area, and it was out of these funds that the money was transferred to the NRC—

Mr. Mazankowski: Porkbarrelling!

Mr. Chrétien: —to build a lab in the area of La Prade, and that included the city of Shawinigan.

PLANNING FOR INSTITUTE

Mr. G. M. Gurbin (Bruce-Grey): Mr. Speaker, my supplementary question is directed to the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources, in answer to his response to my first question. Will the Minister confirm that on January 20, when he announced the establishment of the Shawinigan institute, that planning for this had been going on for two full years, as stated in his press release, and that the decision was made six months after the Ontario initiative began and after it had been refused the co-operation of the National Research Council?

Second, I would like to ask the Minister if he knows what electrochemistry means, and that the institute which the Minister established, using federal funds, is in direct competition with the Ontario initiative?

Finally, the Minister has indicated that this is the first electrochemical institute in Canada. In fact, because of his failure to co-operate and negotiate with the Provinces of Ontario and Quebec, we now have three "first" institutes of electrochemical and hydrogen system studies in Canada. This has happened precisely because of the failure of the federal Government to bring this important area of study under one roof in order to develop this important technology in the interests of Canada.

Hon. Jean Chrétien (Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources): Mr. Speaker, I have been the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources for 17 months. I have not had any direct communication from the Minister of Energy of Ontario on that subject. The NRC was interested in establishing a lab of that nature, and there was some La Prade money available. It was absolutely normal to offer these funds for the development of that lab in an area where the first electrochemical industry in Canada was established at the beginning of the last century.