

Oral Questions

On the second point, I can only repeat what I said. It may be cricket on the part of my hon. friend to ask me a question on a report he has not seen, but it would not be normal for a Minister to answer the question on the same basis.

TRAINING OF CREWS—REGULATORY CHANGES

Hon. John C. Crosbie (St. John's West): Madam Speaker, there were 84 lives lost in the *Ocean Ranger* tragedy. One of the findings of the American board was that the tragedy could have been avoided with proper training of the crew in operating the ballast control system. This implies that Canadian regulations did not require proper training of the crew, or that Canadian inspectors failed to find out that the crew were not properly trained in operating the ballast control system. In other words, there was negligence and carelessness on the part of the Canadian authorities on the offshore.

Will the Minister direct officials of his Department or the Department of Energy to come before the House of Commons transportation committee, or natural resources committee, to tell us what changes they have implemented in the regulations concerning inspection procedures since then? What have they done to prevent a recurrence of this tragedy? What will they do to reassure the hundreds who are working on the offshore now, and their families, that that neglect has not continued?

Hon. Jean-Luc Pepin (Minister of Transport): The short answer to that is yes. Either the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources or myself will be pleased to go before a committee to indicate what has been done since the accident happened.

APPEARANCE OF MINISTERS BEFORE COMMITTEE

Hon. John C. Crosbie (St. John's West): The Minister has replied that he or the Minister of Energy, or both, will come before a committee. Can the Minister tell the House why the Minister of Energy has consistently refused my requests of May 4, June, and July of last year—why did he write me in September refusing to have his officials come before a parliamentary committee? I am glad to see the Minister has now changed his mind. Why has it taken this number of months to have them change their minds, and are they prepared to give a commitment to come before the appropriate committee in the next several weeks to try to reassure East Coast Canadians about the situation on the offshore?

Hon. Jean-Luc Pepin (Minister of Transport): The answer I gave is justified simply by the common practice that Ministers have had, and will forever and ever, have to answer requests from committees to go with their officials or alone to answer these kinds of questions. I have not consulted with the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources on that subject, but I am quite sure there were particular circumstances why he appeared not to have been at a committee at that particular moment when he usually is before it. I can find out why, but as a general proposition Ministers are quite willing to go before committees. Indeed, they spent a lot of time before committees.

• (1420)

REQUEST FOR REFERRAL OF REPORTS TO PARLIAMENTARY COMMITTEE

Hon. James A. McGrath (St. John's East): Madam Speaker, I have a supplementary question for the Prime Minister, since we are dealing with two departments of Government. The loss of the *Ocean Ranger* has been the subject of three inquiries in the United States, including a Congressional inquiry and the one that released its report this week. In addition, we have the Cross Report, which is an evaluation of search and rescue. It was released last December and was critical, admitting that there is no contingency plan in place. As well as that, this week the Prime Minister released to me a further study by the Department of National Defence into an evaluation of search and rescue in the Halifax region. These reports contradict each other.

On the eve of the anniversary of the loss of the *Ocean Ranger*, would the Prime Minister assume his responsibility as Leader of the Government and at least give the Parliament of Canada a chance to see which is right, the view of the Minister of National Defence, the Cross Report, or the U.S. Commission of Inquiry?

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Madam Speaker, as the Minister of Transport has said, if we wait for the final report then we will be able to judge the answers to these questions and decide who is right and who is wrong.

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INDUSTRY

HOUSTON TRANSIT AUTHORITY CONTRACT—THUNDER BAY COMPANY'S BID

Hon. Edward Broadbent (Oshawa): Madam Speaker, I have a question for the Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce. Last Friday the Houston Transit Authority made an incredible decision involving many millions of dollars. It awarded a contract for a transit system to a Japanese company even though a competent Canadian company, Cancar of Thunder Bay, submitted a bid that was \$29 million less. What has the Government of Canada, and specifically the Minister, done to rectify the situation?

Hon. Ed Lumley (Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce and Minister of Regional Economic Expansion): Madam Speaker, that matter comes under the jurisdiction of my colleague, the Minister of State for International Trade, who is in Japan at the present time attending very important trade meetings with the European community, the United States, and Japan. I know that he is very disappointed with the announcement made by the City of Houston.

Two years ago I went to Houston and was involved in the initial stages to ensure that Canada would be considered. The