

Oral Questions

said about this program—and I want to be fair—that there is “poor monitoring of the payments” from the Government, and “one of the most serious problems is that there will be no real evaluation of the program until 1986”, when the program is due to end; and finally, the Auditor General said “the statements of the Government”, about this program, “are misleading”—in view of the all these damning quotes by the Auditor General of the Government’s program, I repeat, will the Government suspend this program until this matter is seriously reviewed by a committee of this House?

Hon. Jean Chrétien (Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources): Madam Speaker, I said that less than two weeks ago the House of Commons was facing supplementary estimates of \$600 million and I was available to appear before the committee to discuss this program. Neither Members of his Party nor the members of the Official Opposition bothered to ask me to appear to explain this program to members of the committee.

If people want to stop the drilling in northern Canada, in Newfoundland, and in Nova Scotia, you abolish the program. If you want to achieve self-sufficiency and security of supply in Canada, you have to maintain the program. If you want to have a policy that will Canadianize the oil and gas industry, you have to give grants. If you go to the old system, through tax incentives, only the multinationals will be drilling, but this House has decided that this industry should be Canadianized for the good of all Canadians.

Mr. Broadbent: Madam Speaker, one is tempted to suggest that the Minister almost believes his own propaganda by the passion figure with which he expresses such nonsense. We in this Party thought Petro-Canada was created to do the job of the multinationals, not to play the hand-out game which the Minister has used and which has been criticized by the Auditor General and which is wasting, I repeat, millions of dollars of taxpayers’ money. We do not need that kind of giveaway program.

REQUEST THAT MINISTER APPEAR BEFORE COMMITTEE

Hon. Edward Broadbent (Oshawa): Madam Speaker, since the Minister just offered to explain to a committee, and in light of the fact that the Auditor General, not someone on this side of the House, but an important official appointed by this House, has made such serious criticism of the program, will the Minister now have the matter referred to the committee, come before the committee himself and try to justify such an unjustifiable mess?

[Translation]

Hon. Jean Chrétien (Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources): Madam Speaker, last week when I rose in the House I said that I was prepared to go before the Committee on National Resources and Public Works as soon as it would be examining the Estimates for my Department. There are procedures in the House for allowing Ministers to testify

before committees. Last week, or maybe it was two weeks ago, when I was willing to meet the Committee, not a single Member of the Opposition asked me to appear before the Committee to discuss these programs, although I was willing to do so. I suppose the Opposition was still thinking it over. It so happens that months ago we already took the necessary action to ensure that program monitoring and efficiency would be evaluated so that I could report as soon as possible on the subject to the House of Commons.

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DISASTERS

QUEBEC—DECEMBER 8 STORM IN THE GASPÉ—POSSIBILITY OF FINANCIAL AID

Mr. Alexandre Cyr (Gaspé): Madam Speaker, my question is directed to the President of the Privy Council. The storm on December 8 of this year has caused very serious damage in Eastern Canada, estimated at millions of dollars in the Gaspé. Through agreements arranging for financial assistance in case of disasters, the Government of Canada provides the provinces with financial aid to cover damages caused by such disasters. Could the Minister inform the House whether he has received an official request from the Province of Quebec which would enable the Province to take advantage of this federal program, and if so, was the request received favourably?

Hon. Yvon Pinard (President of the Privy Council): Madam Speaker, I can confirm to the Hon. Member that if an official request is made by the provincial Government to the Government of Canada for cost sharing under the familiar agreement formula, we can then contribute an amount that may be up to 90 per cent of the cost of damage incurred. In the circumstances, if Quebec submits a request and the extent of the disaster so justifies, we can then contribute up to 90 per cent, but we have yet to receive a request. Finally, I can assure the Hon. Member that if an official request is made, it shall be given very serious consideration.

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● (1430)

[English]

PETRO-CANADA

ACQUISITION OF PETROFINA—DENIAL OF INFORMATION TO AUDITOR GENERAL

Miss Pat Carney (Vancouver Centre): Madam Speaker, my question is also directed to the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources. One of the most damning quotes from the Auditor General’s Report indicates that he has been unable to ascertain whether “due regard to economy has been demonstrated and value for money received” in the \$1.7 billion acquisition of Petrofina by Petro-Canada because Petro-Canada refuses to