

Oral Questions

committee of the House, in order to explain and be questioned about the agreement with the public service unions? Would he use his good offices to make sure that such a meeting can take place at the earliest opportunity?

Hon. Robert de Cotret (President of the Treasury Board): Mr. Speaker, the answer is no. We have to negotiate this deal and it is very complex. We need actuarial reports and a number of technical details.

These are questions of principle and negotiating items that we have set forth to help both sides understand where we are going. It is not explaining in detail, as the Hon. Member asks, what we are going to do. This is a document that states that both parties will pursue discussions along these lines.

As soon as we reach any kind of specific agreement I will be more than happy to talk to any parliamentary committee and to the House in general, if need be, on the how, why, and when of the whole agreement.

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FEDERAL-PROVINCIAL AFFAIRS

NEGOTIATION OF ERDA AGREEMENT WITH BRITISH COLUMBIA

Mr. Patrick Crofton (Esquimalt-Saanich): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Regional Industrial Expansion. The pending ERDA agreement with the Province of British Columbia is of great importance to the people of my home province. Will the Minister advise the House of the status of this proposed agreement?

Hon. Sinclair Stevens (Minister of Regional Industrial Expansion): Mr. Speaker, I know that the Hon. Member will be pleased to learn that discussions are continuing. We have had discussions with the Minister of Industry and Small Business in British Columbia, Mr. McClelland, and he has indicated that he feels a basic agreement on the over-all ERDA can be worked out with respect to the subsidiary funding agreement.

I am very pleased to note that he stated in a major speech on April 29 that there is a new and important spirit of co-operation between Ottawa and the provinces which bodes well for us all. I agree.

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GOVERNMENT EXPENDITURES

MINISTER'S MIDDLE EAST VISIT

Mr. Don Boudria (Glengarry-Prescott-Russell): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Deputy Prime Minister. It concerns junkets on board the sacred instruments of travel of the Government.

In the face of massive cut-backs in the arts, the CBC, and other valuable areas of government activities, could the Deputy Prime Minister tell the House what could have poss-

ibly possessed his colleague, the Minister of Communications, to fill a government jet with family and personal staff members to fly off to Algeria, Greece, and other exotic places, at a cost of \$57,000 to the Canadian taxpayers, at a time when he and his colleagues are preaching restraint and telling us how to tighten our belts? How does he intend to stop this kind of activity in the future?

Hon. Erik Nielsen (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of National Defence): Mr. Speaker, as I recall it the specific journey that the Hon. Member talks about was one which was made in the vital interests of Canada's international trade in one of the leading areas of our technology, namely, telecommunications. The Minister visited several countries in the Middle East on missions to improve markets and establish markets for the sale of Canadian manufactured products and goods.

When I saw the article to which the Hon. Member refers, I, who have that responsibility now, looked very carefully at that trip. I see every justification for the use of government aircraft in that instance. It has nothing but benefit. Certainly it is a far greater advantage to Canada than the example that was portrayed by his Party when it was the Government a couple of years ago, when three government aircraft, with three separate Cabinet Ministers, arrived at roughly the same time in the City of Winnipeg, unbeknownst to each other. All of them could have taken commercial aircraft.

[Translation]

INQUIRY WHETHER TRAVEL EXPENSES WILL BE MADE PUBLIC

Mr. Don Boudria (Glengarry-Prescott-Russell): Mr. Speaker, we know that when he was a Member of the Quebec Cabinet, the Minister of Communications had a reputation for nationalistic flights of fancy. Could the Deputy Prime Minister inform the House today whether he intends to allow Government travel documents to be made public as the previous Government did, so that Canadians can check up on unnecessary trips and spending by this government?

[English]

Hon. Erik Nielsen (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of National Defence): Mr. Speaker, not only are we doing it in public, if the Hon. Member were up to scratch he would know that he or any other Member can walk into National Defence Headquarters where these records are kept, on any day of the week within normal office hours, and have that information fully accessible to him on a daily basis. Certainly the journalists have discovered the accessibility.

It is not like the previous administration which kept them under wraps for three months, and would have liked to have kept them under wraps forever. This Government is open and fully accountable to the people, and any time that anyone wishes to see manifests or whatever other information with respect to the use of administrative flights, they can do so on a daily basis.