

Oral Questions

Mr. Dave Dingwall (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources): Madam Speaker, no one doubts the seriousness of the subject matter to which the Hon. Member refers, and as a result of the seriousness of such a situation, the Government of Canada has taken very, very strong action with the co-operation of the Government of Newfoundland. As you are probably well aware, Madam Speaker, the Hickman Commission was set up. I might add that Mr. Justice Hickman is the Chief Justice of the Trial Division of the Newfoundland Supreme Court. They have those matters under consideration at the present time.

With regard to the report that was released in the United States, I think it premature for me to make comments on a report that is an interim one which will not be delivered to Canada for some three to four weeks.

REGULATIONS AND INSPECTION PROCEDURES

Hon. John C. Crosbie (St. John's West): Madam Speaker, my supplementary question is for the Prime Minister. Last week the Minister of Transport did not say he knew nothing about the subject. He said on behalf of the Government that there were no proper safety procedures now being followed, there was no proper equipment for men on the rigs, and he could give no assurances. Now the Parliamentary Secretary gives us some historical kind of answer.

Can the Prime Minister or his Government give assurance that in the last year steps have been taken to change the regulations, to change the inspection procedures to ensure that safety comes first on the offshore, that the Government is now taking better inspection procedures, that more inspectors have been appointed, and will he have his Minister come before a House of Commons Committee to explain what the Government has done, or have 12 months passed—

Mr. Lalonde: It was on CBC this morning.

Mr. Crosbie: —with nothing done to protect people who work on the offshore?

Mr. Dave Dingwall (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources): Madam Speaker, I find it somewhat ironic that the Hon. Member for St. John's West would wait for a year to go by before raising this particular subject matter.

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Dingwall: If he had a real interest at heart he would have come before the Standing Committee on Natural Resources and Public Works and made that question known to the Minister.

Mr. Crosbie: What is the answer, you turkey?

Mr. Dingwall: To be very brief, the answer is yes.

• (1440)

CANADA-UNITED STATES TEST AND EVALUATION PROGRAM

TESTING OF CRUISE MISSILE

Miss Pauline Jewett (New Westminster-Coquitlam): Madam Speaker, my question is directed to the Prime Minister. The former Secretary of State for External Affairs, now Minister of Justice, confirmed on several occasions last year both in the House—notably on March 18 and April 29—and in the Standing Committee on March 24, that Canada had agreed in principle to the testing of the U.S. air launched Cruise missile. Although the former Minister regretted it had become public knowledge when he said in Committee that he was “indeed disturbed at the leak of this matter”, he still did confirm the agreement. Can the Prime Minister assure the House that Canada can get out of this Cruise testing deal with the U.S., thereby bringing hope to millions of Canadians?

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Madam Speaker, I do not want to fall into the trap of words that the Hon. Member may be unintentionally setting. It is not a matter of getting out of the agreement to test the Cruise. There has been no agreement to test the Cruise.

Since yesterday's exchange with the Hon. Member's Leader I have had the documents verified, the Cabinet decision verified and the exchange with the U.S. verified. Indeed, we have talked of weapons systems testing. I concede, and I did yesterday, that people know, we assume, and Cabinet Ministers assume, that the United States will ask us to test the Cruise. But the purpose of the Cabinet decision was to make it a two-stage process so that we would have an umbrella agreement on the testing of weapons systems, so that we would be able to refer to the umbrella agreement in the future to ensure that certain conditions were met, such as Canadian knowledge, Canadian participation in the scientific knowledge of any tests, Canadian ability to control or interrupt the testing, and so on.

I repeat yesterday's answer. After verification, I can only find an agreement in Cabinet to authorize the Secretary of State for External Affairs to enter into negotiations for a weapons system testing, and the statements of the then Secretary of State, if looked at carefully, indicate that he was talking of a process and that there is a second stage, which is the Cruise. That second stage has not been reached in Cabinet decisions.

Miss Jewett: Either the Prime Minister is being disingenuous or he is saying that his former Secretary of State for External Affairs was constantly misleading the House and the Standing Committee. It is either one or the other. Time and again he confirmed the existence of the agreement.

REQUEST THAT TESTING NOT PROCEED

Miss Pauline Jewett (New Westminster-Coquitlam): Madam Speaker, the former Parliamentary Secretary, the