

these proposals put in a more concrete form before we have study sessions for the benefit of small businessmen.

ALLEGED REFUSAL OF BANKS TO GRANT LOANS

Mr. W. C. Scott (Victoria-Haliburton): Mr. Speaker, I have another supplementary question for the same minister. Is the minister aware that some banks are flatly refusing to accept applications from worthy, bonded customers for small business loans using the excuse that they would rather lend the money at 12 per cent and 13 per cent than at the rate recommended by the Small Businesses Loans Act?

Hon. A. C. Abbott (Minister of State (Small Business)): Mr. Speaker, I have heard such allegations. I have been advised that some banks view the Small Businesses Loans Act with a lack of enthusiasm, and only as recently as yesterday in Kingston when some people were making the same allegation to me as the hon. member. I am investigating this, and I will be holding an early meeting with several senior officers of our chartered banks.

* * *

ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS

POPLAR RIVER PROJECT IN MONTANA—GOVERNMENT ACTION TO ENSURE NO ENVIRONMENTAL DAMAGE

Mr. Ralph E. Goodale (Assiniboia): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Minister of State (Environment) with respect to the concerns of a great many people in the southern part of Saskatchewan and the northern part of Montana about the potential pollution threat resulting from the Poplar River power project. I wonder if at this stage the minister can specify the actions the federal government will take to satisfy itself that this project will not in fact become a serious international air polluter, particularly once it develops beyond the initial 300 megawatts stage?

Hon. Len Marchand (Minister of State (Environment)): Mr. Speaker, the federal Department of the Environment has been watching this project very closely. I want to assure—

An hon. Member: Budgets, studies—

Mr. Marchand: Don't get excited. I want to assure the hon. member that we will be vigilant, and high environmental standards will always be followed by the federal government.

* * *

EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

IMPRISONMENT OF DANYLO SHUMUK IN SOVIET UNION—EFFORTS TO OBTAIN RELEASE

Mr. Joe Clark (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Secretary of State for External Affairs, and it relates to the case of Mr. Danylo Shumuk, who the minister

Oral Questions

will recall is a man who has spent 35 of his 62 years in Soviet prisons exclusively for political crimes. Will the minister tell the House whether officials of his department or the minister himself have intervened directly—and I emphasize directly—with the Soviet authorities here or in Moscow to obtain the release of Mr. Shumuk and permission for him to travel to join his Canadian relatives?

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Donald C. Jamieson (Secretary of State for External Affairs): Mr. Speaker, as the Leader of the Opposition appreciates, I would have to check the list since the matter stretches over a number of years. I have not personally and specifically identified the gentleman in question in the representations I have made. Having said that, however, I have personally delivered lists of individuals to Soviet officials, so I will look into that to see if the name is on those lists, and I will get a chronology of whatever representations there have been.

In a more general way, as I believe the Leader of the Opposition knows since he has supported motions in this House and elsewhere, we have made repeated representations to the Soviet Union with regard to cases of political prisoners and others in similar categories.

Mr. Clark: After the minister looks into this matter and if the name of Mr. Shumuk is not on any of the lists which have been submitted by the minister or his officials will he advise us why the name of Mr. Shumuk is not on those lists, and whether it will be the intention of the government to intervene directly in the case of this gentleman?

Mr. Jamieson: Mr. Speaker, I will be very pleased to do that. By way of an interim answer I can say that individual representations are legitimate and proper when in fact travel to Canada or matters affecting relatives in Canada are concerned, and against that background I suspect that something has been done on an individual basis, but I will look into this matter and provide the answers.

* * *

VETERANS AFFAIRS

SUGGESTED RECONSIDERATION BY CABINET OF INCREASE IN BASIC DISABILITY PENSION

Mr. Stanley Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Veterans Affairs. It is similar to the terms of a motion I sought to move today under Standing Order 43. It is also similar to a question asked earlier by the hon. member for Humber-St. George's-St. Barbe, but there is one important point the minister has not answered as yet.

In view of the fact that Canadians generally do not approve of the government's taking its economic troubles out on veterans and are anxious for the basic rate of the disability pension to be restored to the level established in 1973, will the minister