

same at the first ministers' conference. We will consider these costs in order to keep eastern Canadian industry competitive.

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● (1450)

NATIONAL DEFENCE

NORAD—SPECIAL ALERT ORDERED BY PRESIDENT NIXON ON OCTOBER 25—DELAY IN INFORMING MINISTER

Mr. Doug Rowland (Selkirk): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of National Defence. Is the minister satisfied that the chief of the defence staff exercised good judgment in delaying for six hours informing the political authorities of the first change in alert status of a component of NORAD in 11 years, an inherently dangerous situation, and has the minister now issued new instructions to the chief of the Defence Staff and other senior officers to ensure that he will not be allowed to sleep through the next alert?

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The first part of the hon. member's question is hardly in order. He is asking for an opinion. Perhaps the second part of the question might be replied to by the minister.

Hon. James Richardson (Minister of National Defence): Mr. Speaker, I have every confidence in the defence chief—

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Richardson:—and I think that circumstances have proven that he made the right decision.

Mr. Rowland: The minister informed us yesterday that NORAD headquarters in North Bay was notified of the American decision to go to Defcon III on October 25 about midnight and that the chief of the defence staff was not notified until about 2.18 a.m. Has the minister determined the reasons for this delay, what are those reasons, and what steps has the minister taken to ensure that such a delay does not occur in the future?

Mr. Richardson: Mr. Speaker, I think the verbal advice that came through to our NORAD headquarters was in advance of the main decision. It was a warning advice before the actual decision was taken. The chief of staff did in fact receive the information when the decision was taken.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The hon. member will be recognized for a last supplementary and then the hon. member for Témiscamingue.

Mr. Rowland: Mr. Speaker, in light of the fact that the deputy commander of NORAD is a Canadian officer and must have known almost immediately of the alert, has the minister determined why this information was not immediately transmitted to the Canadian chief of the defence staff? In effect, is our top officer in NORAD

Oral Questions

primarily accountable to the Canadian chief of the defence staff or to an American general?

Mr. Richardson: Mr. Speaker, I would say that the judgment made by our Canadian commander was the same one that our chief of staff made, that the information that had come to us did not relate directly to our Canadian forces.

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[Translation]

AIR TRANSPORT

INQUIRY WHETHER NEGOTIATIONS WITH UNITED STATES COMPLETED

Mr. Réal Caouette (Témiscamingue): Mr. Speaker, I wish to direct a question to the hon. Minister of Transport.

Can he inform the House whether the negotiations with the United States concerning air transportation between Canada and the U.S. have been completed? If so, does he intend to make a statement in the House and to table the agreement that has been reached?

Hon. Jean Marchand (Minister of Transport): Mr. Speaker, negotiations with the United States have been completed, the document has been initialed by the head of each delegation; however, the American government and the Canadian cabinet have yet to ratify the agreement. When this is done, the agreement will become effective.

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ENERGY

MEASURES TO COUNTERBALANCE HIGH PRICE OF PETROLEUM

Mr. Claude Wagner (Saint-Hyacinthe): Mr. Speaker, I wish to direct a question to the Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce regarding the situation prevailing in the province of Quebec.

Since crude oil prices are now higher in Quebec than in the provinces west of the Ottawa Valley and since those are international market prices, can the government assure the House that it is considering an industrial strategy to offset these higher prices?

[English]

Hon. Alastair Gillespie (Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce): Mr. Speaker, I am not sure if I got the full import of the question. Perhaps the hon. member would like to restate his question.

[Translation]

Mr. Wagner: I will gladly do so, Mr. Speaker. My question concerns more particularly the situation existing in the province of Quebec.

Since the price of crude oil is now higher in Quebec than in the provinces west of the Ottawa Valley and that it is on par with world market prices, is the government in a position to give guarantees to the House concerning the establishment of an industrial strategy to counter the effects of this high price?