

Oral Questions

quasi-judicial tribunal, operating at arm's length from the minister, who has no right under the law to interfere in its decisions.

However, I want to say that the investigation report which was released had recommendations for change and a correction in the situation to help prevent it from taking place again. I want to ensure that these changes are put in place because, like the hon. member, I do not want to see this kind of thing happening again.

Ms. Val Meredith (Surrey—White Rock—South Langley, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, there is some suggestion that Butler was able to maintain his day parole status because he had previously been an informant for the RCMP.

Was Butler's freedom due in part to the intervention of the RCMP and is the minister satisfied that the RCMP acted in an appropriate manner?

Hon. Herb Gray (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Solicitor General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the report of the investigation into this matter says that the parole board applied the criterion of the protection of the public as its main guideline.

I am not in a position to comment on the RCMP's involvement or non-involvement in the matter.

At the same time, this happened before the government took office. I want to ensure, in so far as I am able to do so, that the circumstances which led to this tragic occurrence do not happen again. I am glad to have the hon. member's concurrence in this concern of mine.

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AGRICULTURE

Mr. Harold Culbert (Carleton—Charlotte, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food.

As the minister knows, for more than a year now the whole farm safety net program has been studied and reviewed. Can the minister tell the House, the hundreds of farmers across Carleton—Charlotte and the thousands of farmers across Canada what the status is of the study and when we can expect to see its results?

• (1445)

Hon. Ralph E. Goodale (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, through most of 1994 we were discussing the future shape of agricultural safety nets with farm organizations and with provincial governments.

In December 1994 we achieved unanimous agreement among the federal government and all of the provinces with respect to the principles to underpin the future design of safety programming in Canada.

At the moment our officials are working on the drafting of an omnibus memorandum of understanding hopefully to be signed in

due course between the federal government and all of the provinces outlining the basic components of the safety net structure for the future, indicating the necessity for trade compatibility and production and market neutrality.

We want to ensure interprovincial fairness and balance. We want to achieve a cost sharing ratio of about 60 per cent federal, 40 per cent provincial. We want to achieve national consistency across the country with sufficient provincial flexibility to meet local and regional objectives.

We think we will get there. The memorandum of understanding is very well advanced.

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[Translation]

DEFENCE INDUSTRY CONVERSION

Mr. Réal Ménard (Hochelaga—Maisonneuve, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Industry has consistently refused to set up a genuine defence conversion program and has cut the few resources remaining in the budget for the defence industry productivity program, which has had serious consequences for Montreal. In fact, Pratt & Whitney, a leader in Canada's aerospace industry, is planning to move its research centre.

Does the Minister of Industry realize that by refusing to set up a genuine defence conversion program, he is denying the Quebec aerospace industry an opportunity to develop its technological capability and thus undermining its ability to compete?

Hon. John Manley (Minister of Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, first of all, I want to commend the hon. member on the interest he has shown in the broader issues of technological development here in Canada. I am very much aware of the problem concerning Pratt & Whitney, which has been discussed in the media.

I want to say to the hon. member that in the budget, which of course reduced the funding available for this program, we promised to review it. Cabinet intends to discuss the broader issues of technological development, and I am looking forward to hearing what the hon. member has to say about these programs.

Mr. Réal Ménard (Hochelaga—Maisonneuve, BQ): Mr. Speaker, despite the almost British phrasing of his reply, the minister did not answer my question.

My question is: Since Ottawa funded 18 per cent of Pratt & Whitney's R and D investments over the past ten years, mainly for military applications, why does the minister now refuse to support civilian applications of the company's research? Why does the minister refuse to help a Quebec company? That is the question.

Hon. John Manley (Minister of Industry, Lib.): First of all, Mr. Speaker, I may remind the hon. member that Pratt & Whitney is not exactly a Quebec company. It is a multinational that also has plants in Halifax and Lethbridge, Alberta. The issue is one that is important to all regions in Canada.