

Oral Questions

Our priorities, of course, are going into areas where we do not already have representation.

Mrs. Marlene Catterall (Ottawa West): Mr. Speaker, my supplementary is for the same minister. I certainly hope he can move faster than the chain-saws.

Months away from a general election and perhaps a new government in Canada, the Minister of the Environment is failing to do his duty to preserve Clayoquot Sound for future generations.

I ask the minister, how can he preclude this option for the future? How can he stand silent while the forests that have stood for centuries face destruction? Is this the kind of legacy he wants to leave? Is this the kind of leadership he wants to give?

Hon. Jean J. Charest (Minister of the Environment): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member will know that the Government of Canada has moved to include many regions of Canada in our national parks system. For example, we created South Moresby National Park. We created two new national parks in the last year. We set lands aside in North Baffin Island and also signed an agreement for the park on Banks Island in the western Arctic.

We have met our commitments to include some lands in our national parks system. We are striving now to include all regions in the country as we move along with this initiative.

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WESTRAY MINE

Mr. Rod Murphy (Churchill): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Prime Minister.

In response to an Order Paper question I put forward on March 18, 1991 the parliamentary secretary to the Prime Minister responded that correspondence and calls received by the Office of the Prime Minister regarding the Westray coal mine project were noted and forwarded to the Ministry of Industry, Science and Technology.

Yet in reading an access to information response we found that Stanley Hartt and Peter White, the chief of staff and principal secretary of the Prime Minister, on October 16, 1988, on October 17, 1988, October 26, 1988, November 7, 1988, November 14, 1988, January 6, 1989,

January 9, 1989, February 4, and February 8 were directly involved in the funding arrangements. Often they were involved in phone calls and often they were the only representatives of the federal government present.

Why was there a cover-up? Why was that information kept from Parliament?

Hon. Tom Hockin (Minister for Science and Minister of State (Small Businesses and Tourism)): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member knows we have already tabled over 7,000 pages of documents and more will be forthcoming.

He should know too if any mine were going to be established in a region where unemployment was high and regional economic development was needed that the mayors, the reeves, the municipalities and so on of that region would be pressing for it and would be knocking on every door. They would knock on the doors of the Prime Minister and the Minister of Industry, Science and Technology. They would do everything they could to bring the project to fruition. The people who were against it would probably do the same.

• (1450)

There is nothing in this that should alarm anybody who knows how governments work.

Mr. Rod Murphy (Churchill): Mr. Speaker, if that information is what the government wishes to portray, why did it not say that in answer to my question long before the disaster?

On March 18, 1991 again the correspondence was noted and forwarded. Evidently, from what was available through the access to information request, the Prime Minister's office was involved directly and heavily. The chief of staff and the principal secretary of the Prime Minister often were the only federal government representatives involved in the negotiations.

If that is a proper course, why did the government not come clean then?

Hon. Tom Hockin (Minister for Science and Minister of State (Small Businesses and Tourism)): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member's facts are wrong and he knows they are wrong. Just about every key department of government was involved in that decision. People were debating it on both sides.