

Oral Questions

Donald Knight, 48, married with one child; and Germain St. Amour, 37, married with two children. They were inspecting the skip shaft at the 3,750-foot level when broken ore fell 900 feet on to the workers' platform, killing them.

There is no other occupation which is fraught with more danger than the miner's job. Yet, in spite of increased awareness for tougher occupational health and safety rules and practices for the mining industry throughout Canada, we experience tragic accidents like the one in Levack yesterday and Murdochville some weeks ago.

In fact, yesterday's fatalities bring to five the number of deaths at Inco for the month of April.

From time to time the House correctly recognizes the deaths of Canadians who have contributed to the building of our country. Well, Mr. Speaker, Rene Bedard, Wilbrod Gauvin, Donald Knight, and Germain St. Amour are representative of the millions of men and women who, without great fanfare, go about their daily work in building a better Canada yet face grave dangers to life and limb.

In fact these four men are a part of all of us, so we do not ask for whom the bell tolls. It tolls for us.

On behalf of all Hon. Members of the House I should like to extend our deepest sympathy to the families of these four brave men who died in the line of duty, and I would hope that we do the appropriate thing here and now.

Mr. Speaker: I ask Hon. Members to stand for one minute's silence as a gesture of faith, hope, and solidarity with the families of the victims of this terrible tragedy.

[Editor's Note: Whereupon the House stood in silence.]

Mr. Speaker: Oral Questions. The Hon. Member for Vancouver Quadra.

Mr. Turner (Vancouver Quadra): Mr. Speaker, of course we join in the eloquent tribute of the Hon. Member for Nickel Belt (Mr. Rodriguez) in mourning the four dead miners and wishing their families our warmest sympathy.

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

[English]

FINANCE

PROPOSED DOME PETROLEUM TAKEOVER—ADVANCE TAX RULING

Right Hon. John N. Turner (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, I should like to return, if I might, to the Minister of Finance about Dome Petroleum, following upon the answers which he gave in the House yesterday.

Is he claiming that he knows nothing about what could be the largest tax ruling in Canadian history? Is he telling the

House that he is not involved in a tax decision which profoundly affects the economy of western Canada? Is he telling the House that he is not involved in a tax decision which could affect thousands of jobs in western Canada, Canadian ownership of our oil and gas industry, and could involve billions of taxpayers' dollars?

If he is, I am saying to him that it will not wash because it is not credible. What is he really trying to hide and who is he trying to kid in this House?

Hon. Michael Wilson (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, I am not trying to kid anybody. What I am saying is that tax rulings are the responsibility of the Minister of National Revenue. That is what I said yesterday.

A proposal has been put forward by TransCanada PipeLines to Dome Petroleum. It has not been accepted by Dome Petroleum. Until the time that a specific proposal is accepted by Dome Petroleum, I think we should wait to see what happens.

● (1420)

Mr. Turner (Vancouver Quadra): Technically, Mr. Speaker, the ruling has to issue from the Minister of National Revenue. The Minister knows full well that a tax decision of this magnitude must cross the desk of the Minister of Finance, he must be involved in it and he must know about it.

[Translation]

EXTENT OF MINISTER'S KNOWLEDGE

Right Hon. John N. Turner (Leader of the Opposition): Does the Minister of Finance mean to say he is not aware of discussions regarding a tax ruling that may be the most important one in Canada's history, or of the fact that these discussions have been taking place since the beginning of March? Does he not know that his Assistant Deputy Minister, Mr. Ian Bennett, is one of the two senior officials who know all about this question? Doesn't the Minister know what is going on in his Department or doesn't he want Parliament to know?

[English]

Hon. Michael Wilson (Minister of Finance): Yes, Mr. Speaker, I am aware of what happens in my Department. I have not made any statement that would suggest that that is not the case. What I said in my previous answer and what I say again is that the responsibility for tax rulings is the responsibility of the Minister of National Revenue. I would have thought that the Right Hon. Member would know that, as a Minister of Finance himself at some time in the past.

Mr. Turner (Vancouver Quadra): The Minister is correct, Mr. Speaker. I would have known about a decision of this magnitude had I been sitting on his side of the House.

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!