

Oral Questions

body outside parliament. My understanding of the courtesies of parliament is that that is the appropriate approach. I am sure that if I had turned the meeting this afternoon into a press conference about the report, I would have received complaints that I had not presented the report to members of parliament previous to that. That is the explanation. However, the Access group will, as I am sure the honorary patron knows, be having a press conference of their own to explain the recommendations that are being made.

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PUBLIC WORKS**ROLE OF DEPARTMENTAL STAFF IN VIEW OF GREATER USE OF PRIVATE CONSULTANTS**

Mr. R. E. McKinley (Huron-Middlesex): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Public Works. In view of the fact that there is evidence that the Department of Public Works is now adopting a policy of "privatization" where more of the department's work is going to be farmed out to outside consultants in the private sector, can the minister tell us what he plans to do with the large expert staff built up by the Department of Public Works over the years to do this work within the department?

Hon. Judd Buchanan (Minister of Public Works): Mr. Speaker, this is an area at which we are taking a look. In many areas the capacity does not exist within the department. There are some questions relating to the paving of the Alaska Highway, whether in fact we should use the staff within the department or use the private sector. I feel strongly that we should make use of the private sector. There are many cases where the expertise does exist. It is a question of whether one does it or goes to the private sector.

Mr. McKinley: I am sure the minister knows that a lot of expertise does exist within the department. How can he justify a policy of hiring many more outside consultants instead of using expertise within the department in a period of supposed government restraint? Would it not mean that there would be a lot fewer projects completed with the same financial outlay as a result of this policy he is intending to follow?

Mr. Buchanan: Mr. Speaker, the answer to the latter part of the question is no. Like any other department of government or any other employer, we have a certain turnover of staff. It is a question of deciding as this turnover occurs whether the individual who has departed should be replaced or whether we should look at consolidation and make use of the private sector. My inclination is that we should do the latter.

[Mr. Roberts.]

ADMINISTRATION OF JUSTICE**INDEPENDENCE OF JUDICIARY—LAYING OF PREFERRED INDICTMENT WHILE CASE PENDING BEFORE JUDGE**

Mr. Eldon M. Woolliams (Calgary North): Mr. Speaker, I wish to ask the Minister of Justice a question. The other day he spoke in glowing terms about the independence of the judiciary. My question arises from a preferred indictment which his department laid against the relative of a senior pressman in this city. A preliminary hearing was held in reference to a charge of possession for the purpose of trafficking in marijuana. The charge was dismissed at the preliminary hearing stage. The matter was taken before a judge. The minister laid a preferred indictment while the matter was pending before the court. Is that the kind of independence of judiciary the minister endorses?

Hon. Ron Basford (Minister of Justice): Mr. Speaker, the matter, as was clearly indicated by the hon. member for Calgary North, is now before the courts. Therefore, Mr. Speaker, you will appreciate that I have great difficulty in making any comment on it. I can only say that in the interests of the administration of justice I felt it necessary to exercise my right under the Criminal Code to prefer a direct indictment on the basis of sworn evidence placed before me.

Mr. Woolliams: Apart from the case I have mentioned, when a charge has been laid before the courts and dismissed at the preliminary hearing stage, and the matter is then taken before a judge, is it the general policy of the Minister of Justice that while the matter is pending before a judge on which he has to make a determination to prefer an indictment on his own and run rough-shod over the courts of Canada?

Mr. Basford: Mr. Speaker, without in any way accepting the premise of the hon. member's question or in any way being taken to comment on the specific case to which he has referred, that is obviously not the general policy of my department.

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ENERGY**MACKENZIE VALLEY PIPELINE—REQUEST FOR DELAY OF DECISION UNTIL NATIONAL ENERGY BOARD HAS REPORTED**

Mr. Alan Martin (Scarborough West): Mr. Speaker, my question was for the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources. In his absence, I will direct it to the Acting Prime Minister. In view of the obvious and serious concerns facing this country over the next 15 to 20 years relating to our overall energy supply, and in view of the rather irresponsible and extremely premature action on the part of the Leader of the Opposition and the leader of the New Democratic Party in firmly rejecting the Canadian Arctic Gas pipeline proposal at this early stage, will the Acting Prime Minister assure the House that the government will take a much more responsible stance, one which is obviously more in the national interest of Canadians,