

Oral Questions

formula that is now before the House and which, I hope, will be enacted within the next few days.

[*English*]

Mr. Gamble: Madam Speaker, the stupidity lies in the Minister of Public Works' initial suggestion.

LANDLORDS' ACCESS TO INFORMATION

Mr. John Gamble (York North): Madam Speaker, unless the federal Government complies with the general suggestion made by the Minister and supplies total income data to landlords, how would landlords be able to determine accurately how much to charge a tenant for rent? Is that not part and parcel of the arrangement decided upon and recommended by the Minister of Public Works?

[*Translation*]

Hon. Pierre Bussières (Minister of National Revenue): Madam Speaker, I do not think I should answer for the Minister of Public Works as to his intentions in making that statement. As far as I can tell, the comment was made after looking at a number of studies contained in his departmental files.

As far as any possible use of Revenue Canada information is concerned, we shall never violate the principles of the Department of National Revenue. Personal income tax returns are confidential, and that is one of our principles. When we indicate an amount on a tax return, that is because the form is directed to a specific individual and the amount represents that individual's income, and we are therefore maintaining confidentiality.

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[*English*]

PORTS

CONSTRUCTION OF COAL TERMINAL AT PRINCE RUPERT, B.C.

Mr. Jim Fulton (Skeena): Madam Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Transport regarding what seems to be a Fantasy Island situation in Prince Rupert. As he knows, last August, Dillingham-Sceptre accepted a fixed price contract to construct a coal terminal. In November they began construction and now, two months later, that company has suddenly received authorization from the federal Government to do the project on a cost plus basis.

My question to the Minister is threefold. First, is the Minister convinced in his own mind that there is no Canadian company capable of constructing the coal terminal at a fixed price; secondly, will he table all of the project bids from last summer; thirdly, how can there possibly be effective cost controls on this project when all of the supervisory personnel are American citizens? Is this not likely to be like the Montreal Olympics? Is the Minister going to allow 50 per cent, 100 per cent or 200 per cent overruns on this project?

Hon. Jean-Luc Pepin (Minister of Transport): Madam Speaker, I presume my hon. friend calls it Fantasy Island because there are so many things that the federal Government is doing in that area to enhance its economic prestige and quality. I agree with him that it is really wonderful what is happening on Ridley Island now.

On the subject of the contract itself, I am aware that my hon. friend has been in extensive consultation with officials of the National Harbours Board and I compliment him on that. If there is something else he wants to know, I will make sure he gets it. The reason for the cost plus approach to this project is essentially one of timing. Things could not be done sequentially; they had to be done concurrently. The packaging of the marine works had to be done in relationship to the other works taking place in the coal development on the Island; the stacker reclaimer and the railway loop and so on and so forth. I repeat, the reason it had to be done this way, i.e. cost plus, is essentially one of timing. Because of that, the control system is rather strong. There is a good Board on which both National Harbours Board and private sector people are represented, with a Treasury Board officer watching over the whole thing, and we will try to make sure there will not be any abuse in the cost-plus contract. If my hon. friend thinks there might be, I will go into an inquiry session for him.

Mr. Fulton: Madam Speaker, I thank the Minister for his comments. I know many of the Members on the Prince Rupert Board are very careful about cost overruns.

ISSUANCE OF WORK PERMITS TO AMERICAN CITIZENS

Mr. Jim Fulton (Skeena): Madam Speaker, my supplementary is directed to the Minister of Employment and Immigration who earlier in this Question Period made everyone in this House aware of such comments as "buy Canadian", and "a lot of Americans would be pleased if their Government brought in initiatives like Canada". Would the Minister explain to the two million unemployed in Canada right now why 23 per cent of the workers at Ridley Island are American citizens and why his office in Vancouver gave them EMP2151 work permits without ever posting those jobs anywhere in Canada? Is he going to tell these two million unemployed Canadians in Canada right now that not a single one of them is capable of taking one of those jobs at Ridley Island?

Hon. Jean-Luc Pepin (Minister of Transport): Madam Speaker, on behalf of the Minister of Employment and Immigration I have looked at this matter. Someone gave me a hint that it might come up. I found that out of 103 employees on the marine works, nine of them are Americans. They are legally in Canada, they have a work permit from the Department of Immigration—

Some Hon. Members: Why?

Mr. Pepin:—all are supervisors, and all are underwater drilling experts. It is important to underline that fact. This company, Sceptre, is partly owned by an American firm, I