

Oral Questions

my obligation to appoint a panel as soon as possible to resume the environmental assessment work that was stopped last week.

I said on both Monday and Tuesday that at the same time, the government will take the necessary steps to ensure that the Alameda project not proceed until a full and proper environmental assessment can be completed, according to the court order under which we are operating.

Mr. Paul Martin (LaSalle—Émard): Mr. Speaker, given the fact that it is very clear that for this minister the necessary steps are to see that project completed perhaps another minister will respond. My question is for the Minister of Transport.

The permit the minister refers to is under the International Rivers Improvement Act, but no permit has been issued under the Navigable Waters Protection Act which is required under the federal guidelines.

The Minister of the Environment refuses to act, refuses to take his responsibility. Will the Minister of Transport obtain an injunction to see that construction stops until he issues the requisite permit. Also, will he undertake today in this House not to issue that permit until the work of an environmental panel has been completed?

Hon. Robert de Cotret (Minister of the Environment): Mr. Speaker, a number of options are being looked at very carefully. I will name a few of those options.

There is the possibility of a court action to seek an injunction as my hon. colleague is saying. There is the possibility to act under two statutes under the Fisheries Act. There is also the possibility of having an agreement to have work halted on the project. All three are options that we are pursuing very actively right now.

• (1420)

I am sure my hon. colleague will agree with me that our purpose in this House is to make sure that we do have a full environmental assessment of this project before any work can be done and that should mitigation be required, that those measures be clearly outlined so that we can deal fairly and equitably with the environ-

mental concerns that many citizens have expressed. That is exactly what we are doing at the moment.

Mr. Paul Martin (LaSalle—Émard): Mr. Speaker, this government defines mitigation as cash compensation after the damage has been done. That is not good enough.

[*Translation*]

My question is directed to the Deputy Prime Minister. National unity means sharing common values. We believe in protecting the environment.

[*English*]

Mr. Speaker, the Minister of the Environment flip-flops. The Minister of Transport refuses to act. There are allegations of an agreement between Tories. On Point Aconi, the minister has failed. On Alcan, the minister has failed. CO² pollution, the minister has failed. Bill C-78, the minister has failed—

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. member will please put the question.

Mr. Martin: You have got to admit, Mr. Speaker, I am learning.

Mr. Speaker: Not everybody would agree with you.

Mr. Martin: Mr. Speaker, my question for the Deputy Prime Minister is this. Why is this government sitting idle while this nation's reputation for environmental protection is being torn to shreds? Will he ask the minister to proceed?

Hon. Robert de Cotret (Minister of the Environment): Mr. Speaker, when we talk about our environmental reputation, I must tell my hon. colleague across the way that we have one of the very finest environmental reputations in the world.

We introduced Bill C-78. It is a bill that goes further than most bills anywhere else in the world. The Dutch have said publicly that we have a bill that could be a model for the industrialized countries of this world. We have moved on acid rain. We were the first government to be able to conclude an agreement with the U.S. on acid rain. We are finally developing the Green Plan. The Green Plan will be a model for most countries who are trying to achieve what we hope to achieve for the environment.