

Oral Questions

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Would the hon. member ask the question again.

Mr. Cossitt: Would the Prime Minister reveal the circumstances surrounding the mysterious leaving of Canada of Leslie James Bennett of the RCMP on condition, apparently, that he not reveal the contents of the Featherbed file?

Mr. Trudeau: Mr. Speaker, I have never heard the name before. I will refer the question to the Solicitor General.

POSSIBILITY PRIME MINISTER INTERFERED WITH FORCE IN SECURITY WORK

Mr. Tom Cossitt (Leeds): Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the Prime Minister how he was able to tell the House last Tuesday in reply to a question of mine that he had never heard of the Featherbed file and yet the next day the Solicitor General told the House that the file existed and was known to the security committee of the cabinet of which I believe the Prime Minister is a member. Therefore, I would like to ask the Prime Minister pointblank—a yes or no answer—has he in any way directly or indirectly interfered with the RCMP in pursuing the matter of national security in this country?

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, I would be prepared to answer the question if the hon. member would say he would take my word for the answer.

Mr. Cossitt: The Prime Minister says he will answer my question if I am prepared to accept his answer. That is a hypothetical situation. I am certainly prepared to consider whether his answer is true, but he cannot ask me in advance to accept his answer when he will not even tell the House what he has to say. I can see too—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The hon. member for St. John's West.

* * *

ENERGY

NEWFOUNDLAND'S OFFSHORE OIL AND GAS REGULATION—
POSSIBILITY OF AGREEMENT ON QUESTION TO BE PUT TO
SUPREME COURT

Mr. John C. Crosbie (St. John's West): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources. As the minister no doubt knows, on October 24 the province of Newfoundland proclaimed its own oil and gas regulations for the offshore area off the east coast and set out its case with regard to offshore mineral rights. The minister of mines and energy of Newfoundland said that the province of Newfoundland is prepared to go to the Supreme Court of Canada on this question if two matters can be settled first. The first is whether the province can have access to certain documents in the hands of the government of Canada relating to the so-called thirty year rule which applies to confederation, and second, whether the government of Canada will agree that both sides have to

[Mr. Cossitt.]

agree on the terms of the question to be asked the court. Can the minister advise the House whether those two points will be met by the government of Canada, whether disclosure of these documents will take place and whether both sides will have to agree to the question?

Hon. Alastair Gillespie (Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources): Mr. Speaker, as far as I know there was a favourable decision taken in principle on these matters some months ago, and I do not understand why the Newfoundland government has not been able to move more expeditiously.

NEWFOUNDLAND'S OFFSHORE OIL AND GAS REGULATIONS—
POSSIBILITY OF ESTABLISHING INTERIM JOINT MANAGEMENT
COMMITTEE

Mr. John C. Crosbie (St. John's West): The minister is poorly briefed, but I cannot brief him here now. The minister of mines and energy of Newfoundland, realizing that there are now two sets of oil and gas regulations in force in that area, has said he is suggesting to the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources that the two governments set up an interim offshore management committee so that there will be a forum for discussion and co-ordination and so that the industry will know where to go to get answers in this matter of disputed jurisdiction. Has the minister received that submission, and what will be the reply of the government of Canada to this suggestion?

Hon. Alastair Gillespie (Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources): Mr. Speaker, I think that is an interesting and constructive suggestion. I would be very pleased to consider it. I have to point out, however, that at no time has the Newfoundland government taken us into its confidence. It published these new regulations without showing them to us. Nor did I within a week or some days of their publication receive a copy. I hope that the Newfoundland government and the minister in particular will see that it is in their interest to collaborate. I can assure him of our wish to co-operate.

* * *

FISHERIES

PACIFIC SALMON ENHANCEMENT PROGRAM—REASON FOR
ASKING FISHERMEN TO BEAR COST

Mr. Stuart Leggatt (New Westminster): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Fisheries. It concerns the salmon enhancement program in British Columbia. The study done by his department in September of this year indicated that the major cost of the salmon enhancement program would be borne by a fishermen's licensing arrangement. Would the minister advise the House why fishermen should begin to bear any of the cost of that program before the returns come to them? There is about a four-year lead time after the hatch gets out to sea. Why is the minister now suggesting that commercial fishermen immediately have to bear the cost when they do not have any other returns?