

Oral Questions

the question of safety, the Government of Newfoundland has acted unilaterally, without consultation with either the companies involved or the federal Government.

AVAILABILITY OF SEARCH AND RESCUE FACILITIES

Hon. James A. McGrath (St. John's East): Madam Speaker, maybe I could direct a supplementary question to the Minister of National Defence, who shares my concern. One of the reasons given by the Newfoundland Government for ordering the rigs in, apart from the weather conditions, last week and today, was the lack of adequate search and rescue support. Last week it took six hours for aircraft to reach the area from Summerside and points on the mainland. In light of the fact that we now have 70 knot winds today, 50 foot seas, and three rigs out there with Canadians on board, what assurance can the Minister of National Defence give me that he has taken the correct course in ordering those rigs to stay there? By doing so he is jeopardizing the lives of those people, and the Minister has a responsibility in that area.

Hon. J. Gilles Lamontagne (Minister of National Defence): Madam Speaker, I do not think there is any question of jeopardizing the lives of anyone in this area off Newfoundland. I believe the search and rescue capabilities in that vicinity to be in the best state of readiness possible. I can assure the Hon. Member that even as late as this morning I was given a map indicating the position of all the ships, all the aircraft, and even all the icebergs—

An Hon. Member: They are not there now.

Mr. Lamontagne:—as well as all the drilling rigs. We are continually monitoring the situation as far as search and rescue and the movement of the icebergs are concerned. At the moment, in St. John's there is one Buffalo fixed wing aircraft and one Labrador helicopter on standby. We have taken all precautions necessary and appropriate and this proves that the security and safety of the people in the region are our main concern.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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CANADA-UNITED STATES TEST AND EVALUATION PROGRAM

QUERY RESPECTING POSSIBLE ESTABLISHMENT OF U.S. SURVEILLANCE BASES

Mr. Simon de Jong (Regina East): Madam Speaker, in the absence of the Deputy Prime Minister and Secretary of State for External Affairs I would like to address my question to the Minister of National Defence. This past weekend Mr. George Ignatieff, Canada's former ambassador to the United Nations and our former representative to NATO, stated that our participation in the development of the Cruise missile will make us less secure and more susceptible to an attack. He

maintained that the testing and the development of the Cruise missile would result in the United States wanting to set up surveillance systems in Canada to intercept Soviet air-launched Cruise missiles.

Can the Minister tell the Canadian people if there has been any discussion with the American Government to go beyond the commitments under the weapons testing agreement, to include the establishment of American surveillance bases and facilities in Canada?

Hon. J. Gilles Lamontagne (Minister of National Defence): Madam Speaker, at the moment there are no commitments of which I am aware, other than the agreement which the Department of External Affairs has signed with regard to the testing of weapons systems.

An Hon. Member: Who would know if you don't?

Mr. Lamontagne: I have not received a request from the United States Government. I have not even signed the memorandum of understanding that will determine how the testing could be carried out. At the moment I think Hon. Members must wait and see what will happen. However, one thing is certain. The objective of our Government's policy is to prevent war and preserve peace, which is what we believe to be the best policy to follow. All this public discussion of the Cruise missile testing makes up but one element of the global issues of disarmament, of peace against war, and clearly much discussion is necessary before we can say anything more on the matter.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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PUBLIC SERVICE

DILEMMA OF PREGNANT WOMAN WORKING ON VIDEO DISPLAY TERMINAL

Mr. Rod Murphy (Churchill): Madam Speaker, my question is directed to the President of the Treasury Board. Last Friday evening the CBC television news covered the situation involving a woman living in Kenora, Ontario, who is seven months pregnant and must work on a video display terminal. She fears for the health of her child, yet because of federal Government rules she has no choice but to return to work on a video display terminal. Can the President of the Treasury Board tell the House what regulations will be put in place and what steps the Government will take to protect the health of this woman and her unborn child?

Hon. Herb Gray (President of Treasury Board): Madam Speaker, I will be very happy to review the case and see if the present rules adequately respond to her needs and those of others in similar situations. We are certainly very concerned about maintaining very high health and safety standards with regard to federal employees.