

*Oral Questions***MCDONALD ROYAL COMMISSION**

SUGGESTED PRO-GOVERNMENT BIAS OF MEMBERS

Mr. David Kilgour (Edmonton-Strathcona): Madam Speaker, my question is directed to the Solicitor General. It deals with the McDonald commission and I shall put it in English.

[English]

The commission has been sitting for four years. One of its members made a \$500 donation last year to the Liberal party while the commission was sitting. The chairman is the past chairman of the Alberta Liberal party. Recently it has been indicated that a complaint against his colleague, the minister of energy, was heard in secret and dismissed without hearing the minister. Does the minister not think that perhaps the point of a reasonable apprehension of pro-Liberal or pro-government bias has been met by the commission? Therefore, would he not consider turning over all the relevant evidence to the various attorneys general?

Hon. Bob Kaplan (Solicitor General): Madam Speaker, the McDonald commission has proceeded for a very long time, and in that period of time it has certainly well demonstrated its independence from the government of the day. I am looking forward to its report and we are doing everything we can in government to co-operate with the McDonald commission so that the report will be of maximum use to Canadians when it is available. As I have indicated to the House, it will be received by the government by the end of next March. Shortly thereafter, all relevant findings and evidence will be brought to the attention of provincial attorneys general and to my colleague, the Attorney General of Canada. I hope that in very short order the recommendations of the McDonald commission will speak for themselves to Canadians regarding the independence of its work.

Mr. Kilgour: Madam Speaker, the question of a stale prosecution as a term of law does not seem to be well known to the Solicitor General. My question is one of apprehension of bias. The minister will be aware that Marshall Crowe was found by the Supreme Court of Canada to create such a reasonable apprehension of bias that he was unfit to consider hearing the Mackenzie Valley pipeline inquiry before the National Energy Board. Does the minister not think that the indications of pro-government bias already demonstrated by the McDonald commission are far greater than they were in the case of Marshall Crowe?

Mr. Kaplan: Madam Speaker, I am not aware of any evidence of pro-government bias by the McDonald commission. When members opposite formed the government, they had a full opportunity, if they felt that way, to do something about it. My understanding was that the government, which the hon. member supported, also supported and co-operated with the McDonald commission in the hope that its findings would be forthcoming soon and would be of maximum benefit.

ENERGY

INQUIRY RESPECTING CONTINGENCY PLANS TO ASSIST UNEMPLOYED OIL WELL DRILLERS

Mr. Bill Wright (Calgary North): Madam Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Employment and Immigration. Last Friday in the House I quoted from the November report of the Canadian Association of Oilwell Drilling Contractors which indicated that 200 rigs were leaving Canada and that 10,800 workers would lose their jobs. On Friday morning the minister was present at a meeting in which the drilling contractors told him that the total could reach 200 rigs with 12,000 workers losing their jobs. Could the minister tell the House if he has any contingency plans to help those workers?

Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Minister of Employment and Immigration): Madam Speaker, we pretty consistently monitor job registrations and vacancies in the province of Alberta. I can report to the member that as of last week the number of registrations in our offices is down from what it was last year, showing that there is less demand for job applications than almost a year ago.

Mr. Crosbie: You have given up.

● (1500)

Mr. Axworthy: The fact of the matter is, Madam Speaker, that there is such an intense demand for labour in the province of Alberta, particularly skilled labour, that where there may be a small downturn in one part of the economy, or in the industrial sector, there is a very major upturn in other parts. There will still be a very intense demand for labour in the province of Alberta without any abatement whatsoever.

Mr. Wright: Madam Speaker, my supplementary question is addressed to the same minister. A recent financial magazine reported that there would be job losses in the following Ontario cities: Stratford, Welland, Hamilton, Sault Ste. Marie and Peterborough. Those were the only cities mentioned. I wonder if the minister could tell us if he is aware of the number of workers who will be laid off due to the downturn in the oil industry, and what are his plans to help these workers?

Mr. Axworthy: Madam Speaker, I think I just pointed out to the hon. member that there is already a very intense demand for labour in the province of Alberta. If the hon. member would look at the proposals and initiatives put forward in the budget, he would see that the kinds of incentives which are being offered major exploration and development and in regard to conversion from oil to gas, amount to approximately \$8 billion to \$10 billion worth of reinvestment back into the economy, which will create a strong demand in the entire country.