

connection with the expedition of this project, has the minister been in contact with Argentinian officials, either here through the embassy of Argentina or directly with the government of Argentina, considering the very serious nature of the accusations in the press?

Mr. Gillespie: Mr. Speaker, I have had no dealings whatever with any Argentinian official on this matter.

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GOVERNMENT ADMINISTRATION

CROWN CORPORATIONS' BID ON VENEZUELAN PROJECT— REQUEST FOR DETAILS OF BID AND APPOINTMENT OF AGENT

Mr. Don Mazankowski (Vegreville): Mr. Speaker, I should like to direct a question to the Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce arising out of the Canaven transaction. In light of the minister's reply to the House yesterday, as reported at page 1555 of *Hansard*, to the effect that no agent had been appointed at this particular time, may I ask the minister whether he has been in touch with Mr. Robert L. Grassby, the former chief negotiator for this consortium, who has stated that he personally had hired such an agent before he left that position on September 30, 1976?

[Translation]

Hon. Jean Chrétien (Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce): No, Mr. Speaker, I have not been in touch with this gentleman. The officials of my department tell me no contract has been signed with any agent, but, under the Venezuela's law, if we bid and get a contract, we must obtain the services of a local firm to operate in Venezuela; such is the law of the country.

[English]

Mr. Mazankowski: Mr. Speaker, I have a supplementary question. The minister also said yesterday that he would be informing the cabinet today as to the full terms and nature of the bid. I presume that by now the minister is fully briefed on the totality of the subject. Is there anything further that the minister can add to his statement of yesterday with respect to the appointment of the agent and with respect to meeting all the requirements of the Venezuelan government that have been put forth?

[Translation]

Mr. Chrétien: Mr. Speaker, Canaven has not yet completed its bid; there are still a few points to clarify. What I can say to the House is that it will be impossible for the group to submit a bid likely to meet all the Venezuela government requirements, but I am told that other tenders will not be able to meet them either. In these circumstances, the risk that had to be taken at this time will not be taken because as a Canadian group we do not intend to assume responsibility for all public works which must be performed; but we are prepared to supply the equipment and technical services.

Oral Questions

[English]

ATOMIC ENERGY OF CANADA LIMITED

ALLEGATIONS OF BRIBERY IN CONNECTION WITH SALE OF NUCLEAR REACTOR—POSSIBILITY OF INQUIRY

Mr. T. C. Douglas (Nanaimo-Cowichan-The Islands): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources which arises out of a report in the Argentine newspaper *La Razon* alleging that Jose Ber Gelbard, former minister of economic affairs and Adolfo Mario Savino, former minister of defence, were involved in the \$2.4 million paid by AECL into a bank account either in Lichtenstein or Switzerland in the name of Intercontinental Trading Development Establishment. I want to ask the minister whether he personally has been in touch with the president of the National Atomic Energy Commission of Argentina, Captain Carlos Castro Madero, who himself is carrying on an investigation into the possibility of Argentinian officials having been bribed in connection with the sale of a CANDU reactor to Argentina, and has he contacted the Canadian embassy in Buenos Aires to see whether or not discussions can be held with the government of Argentina so as to investigate this matter fully?

Hon. Alastair Gillespie (Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources): Mr. Speaker, I have not been in touch with Captain Madero or the Argentinian embassy on this matter, but I believe there have been discussions, or at least communications, between Captain Madero and the chairman of AECL.

REASON FOR COMMUNICATING WITH ITALIMPIANTI BY LETTER—SUGGESTED DISCONTINUANCE OF PRACTICE OF PAYING FEES TO UNDISCLOSED AGENTS

Mr. T. C. Douglas (Nanaimo-Cowichan-The Islands): A supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. In answer to a question a few minutes ago the minister said they had written a letter, or that the chairman of AECL had written a letter, to Italimpianti. I want to ask the minister why he himself has not been in touch with the Italian firm that was a partner in the sale of the reactor to Argentina. Would he tell me why he has not used the services of the Canadian embassy in Rome in order to find out who was the recipient of the \$2.4 million, whether or not the Intercontinental General Trading establishment is a fictitious organization, and in order to get other particulars? This matter has been going on for some time. It is weeks since the House was acquainted with the concern expressed by the Auditor General, and I would ask why we are waiting for a letter to arrive rather than having an immediate communication with the people who could give us the information, namely, Italimpianti?

● (1420)

Hon. Alastair Gillespie (Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources): Mr. Speaker, I think this is for a very good reason, that the arrangement was entered into by Atomic Energy of Canada Limited with its Italian partner, and I believe the most effective way of dealing with this matter is to ask the senior officers of Atomic Energy of Canada Limited to