

Oral Questions

Hon. Member on her first question in the House of Commons. I would like to say to the House that I will be in a position to report some time in the future on the nature of the cuts in my Department.

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Chrétien: I think that we have to review some of the programs to make sure that there is no abuse and that they are serving the public, but perhaps cutting some of the costs of these programs. I do think that it is possible in the ministry to find some cuts.

I am very shocked to see the Tories do not appreciate a minister who tries to cut down expenditures in his Department.

CHIP AND OFF-OIL PROGRAMS

Ms. Lynn McDonald (Broadview-Greenwood): Madam Speaker, the purpose of a job-creation program—that is by reallocation of funds—is that more jobs be created in the new program than are lost in the programs being cut. I am somewhat disturbed to see that no calculation has been made.

I wish to inquire about two programs particularly, the CHIP Program and Off-Oil. These are Programs both important for conservation and job creation. Can we have the assurances of the minister, or any minister for that matter, that these two Programs will not be cut?

Hon. Jean Chrétien (Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources): Madam Speaker, it is my intention to maintain these programs but I will try to use them in a more efficient way. There were some complaints which I received from the private sector that there were a lot of abuses in the system. I would like to make them more efficient so that the consumer would benefit from these programs but at the same time the taxpayer would have equal value for the money invested.

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CANADIAN NATIONAL RAILWAYS

INVESTMENT IN CAST SHIPPING GROUP

Mr. Howard Crosby (Halifax West): Madam Speaker, I have a question for the Minister of Transport concerning the continuing involvement of Canadian National Railways in the CAST shipping group. The minister knows that Canadian National Railways have already invested \$60 million in CAST. They have provided extensive credit for freight rates and credit for onshore facilities. Now the time has come to cut the losses and bail out of CAST.

Will the Minister give the House his personal assurance that no more public funds will be given to this foreign owned shipping group? Will he make Canadian National Railways co-operate so that all the facts related to this unfortunate investment will be disclosed to the Canadian Transport Commission hearing in November? Other Canadian ports and shipping interests have a right to know these facts.

Hon. Jean-Luc Pepin (Minister of Transport): Madam Speaker, I think that anybody who has read the papers in recent days knows that the Chairman of CN has been quite clear on the subject. CN is remaining in CAST to protect its investment, but he has added that there is no intention on the part of CN to add to the liability it has in CAST presently.

With respect to the facts and fiction on the CN investment in CAST, there will be any number of inquiries. There is one coming soon to the CTC which will be looking into the second CN investment in CAST. I presume that the parliamentary committee on transportation could look at it again. I am quite sure that there will be a number of learned essays, books and articles on the subject in the future.

POSITION OF MINISTER

Mr. Howard Crosby (Halifax West): Madam Speaker, the Minister of Transport must know that Canadian National Railways have consistently fought to keep the relationship with the CAST shipping group secret. They have taken cases to the Supreme Court of Canada to prevent disclosure of these facts. He also must know that Canadian National Railways on other occasions have indicated that they would no longer invest further public funds in CAST and went back on this word by becoming involved in other activities with CAST. Would he simply state his position before the House of Commons with respect to the matter of Canadian National Railways' involvement in CAST. He was in favour of it a year ago. Is he still in favour of continuation on this relationship?

Hon. Jean-Luc Pepin (Minister of Transport): Madam Speaker, everyone knows that I try not to run on a day to day basis these Crown corporations for which I am responsible. When the chairman of one of those corporations states as clearly as Mr. Horner did yesterday that there was no intention on the part of CN to increase its liabilities in the CAST organization, I prefer to quote him than to take responsibility myself for imposing these views on an excellent board, excellent chairman, and an excellent president.

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NATIONAL DEFENCE

ANNOUNCED CUTS IN BUDGET AND ADJUSTMENT OF PROGRAMS

Hon. Allan B. McKinnon (Victoria): Madam Speaker, my question is for the Minister of National Defence. Yesterday the Minister of Finance announced a \$230 million cut in the defence budget. I presume that this cut is in addition to the \$200 million cut announced at the time of the June budget. Would the Minister tell the House how much of this cut applies to this fiscal year and how much to 1983-84? Would he also explain the remarks of the Minister of Finance that there will be some adjustments in the nature of the programs we have planned to undertake? What adjustments, and what programs?