

Oral Questions

Hon. Frank Oberle (Minister of State for Science and Technology): Mr. Speaker, I do not wish to anticipate anything. I have appointed three eminent persons to consult with the management of the NRC and the Council with regard to its budgetary allocations and other matters. I would prefer to await the outcome of this exercise and for the report.

Mr. Turner (Ottawa—Carleton): Supplementary, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: The Hon. Member for Ottawa—Carleton on a supplementary question.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

TIMEFRAME FOR CONDUCTING REVIEW

Mr. Barry Turner (Ottawa—Carleton): Mr. Speaker, will the Minister indicate to the House the timeframe for the group to report to him?

Hon. Frank Oberle (Minister of State for Science and Technology): Again, Mr. Speaker, I will be bringing the group together immediately. I would not wish to put undue pressure on it in terms of time, or indeed in its terms of reference.

Mr. Berger: By next April, I would hope.

Mr. Oberle: It would be my wish to proceed swiftly since these cuts would not come into effect until the next fiscal year after April. I would expect this exercise to be concluded before the end of the year.

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PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE

ALLEGED CONDUCT OF PRESS SECRETARY

Ms. Margaret Mitchell (Vancouver East): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Deputy Prime Minister. It concerns the Government's policy regarding equality for women in the workplace. The Prime Minister will know by now that there have been additional complaints from a number of women reporters concerning the unprofessional sexist conduct of his Press Secretary. Does the Deputy Prime Minister agree that if the Prime Minister believes in equality, and I think he does, he should take this matter seriously and investigate these allegations which really question the integrity of his office?

Hon. Don Mazankowski (Deputy Prime Minister and President of the Privy Council): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Justice responded to that question a couple of days ago and indicated at the time that the Press Secretary was acquiring legal counsel to deal with this issue. I think that has been done. I feel it would be inappropriate to comment any further on this particular issue at this time.

• (1200)

REQUEST FOR INVESTIGATION

Ms. Margaret Mitchell (Vancouver East): Mr. Speaker, this does not prevent the Prime Minister from taking action within his own office. The question is much broader—

Mr. Speaker: I ask the Hon. Member to put her question.

Ms. Mitchell: Since women across the country—not just women on Parliament Hill—face sexual harassment in the workplace every day but are afraid to make complaints, why does the Prime Minister not set an example for other employers by investigating this matter and by setting a higher standard? Or does he, like some Members of this House, think it's just a big joke?

Hon. Don Mazankowski (Deputy Prime Minister and President of the Privy Council): Mr. Speaker, I hope that the Hon. Member, for whom I have a great deal of respect, will reflect on the last part of her statement. The Minister of Justice has pointed out very clearly that—

Ms. Jewett: It's not *sub judice*.

Mr. Mazankowski: —in the interest of fairness in a matter concerning these types of allegations, in Canada one is usually considered innocent until proven guilty.

Ms. Mitchell: I am talking about allegations.

Mr. Mazankowski: The Press Secretary has obtained legal counsel. I suspect the matter will be handled in that manner.

Ms. Mitchell: That's not good enough for the women of Canada.

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TRADE

CANADA-UNITED STATES NEGOTIATIONS—AUTO PACT

Right Hon. John N. Turner (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, in light of the ambiguous reply of the Minister of Finance to the Hon. Member for Oshawa, will the Deputy Prime Minister give us a categorical undertaking that the Auto Pact, particularly the Canadian production and contents safeguards, is not negotiable and is not on the table in the current talks with the United States?

Hon. Michael Wilson (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, I believe the Hon. Member was a member of Cabinet when the Auto Pact was negotiated. He knows full well that on one year's notice the Americans can drop out of the Auto Pact.

Mr. Turner (Vancouver Quadra): That's not the question!

Mr. Wilson (Etobicoke Centre): What we have to do is ensure that we keep our automotive industry as competitive