

Oral Questions

MINISTER'S KNOWLEDGE

Right Hon. Joe Clark (Leader of the Opposition): Does the Minister know if the evidence that was available to the British courts that led to the conviction of Mr. Hambleton is available to Canadian authorities?

Hon. Mark MacGuigan (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada): Madam Speaker, that is the question I just answered.

ADMISSIBILITY OF EVIDENCE IN CANADA

Right Hon. Joe Clark (Leader of the Opposition): Is it the position of the Government of Canada that there is any bar to the admissibility in Canada of the evidence that led to the conviction of Mr. Hambleton as a spy in Great Britain?

Hon. Mark MacGuigan (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada): Madam Speaker, I am not in a position to answer that question.

Mr. Nielsen: You were yesterday.

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ST. LAWRENCE SEAWAY

INCREASE IN TOLLS—REQUEST FOR TALKS WITH UNITED STATES AUTHORITIES

Mr. J. M. Forrestall (Dartmouth-Halifax East): Madam Speaker, the Minister of Transport will be aware that significant toll increases in the St. Lawrence Seaway will come into effect in 1983. They are far and above the six and five goal set by the Government. Will the Minister consider reopening talks with his United States counterparts with respect to this unduly heavy increase in tolls? Will he do this from the perspective of the very serious impact this will have on Canadian registered ships using the Great Lakes and the Seaway system next year?

Hon. Jean-Luc Pepin (Minister of Transport): Madam Speaker, in the second year of the agreement between the Canadian and American authorities there was to be an increase of 10 per cent. I understand that an exchange of views took place between the two authorities on this matter and they were not particularly fruitful. The Americans are not particularly eager to reduce that 10 per cent. At the moment I am looking to the special committee which makes the decision on this matter in order to obtain a recognition of the 10 per cent as being an exception, on the basis of an international agreement.

EXEMPTION SOUGHT FOR CANADIAN REGISTERED SHIPS

Mr. J. M. Forrestall (Dartmouth-Halifax East): Madam Speaker, given the apparent failure, will the Minister give consideration to an exclusion for Canadian registered ships plying between Canadian ports?

Hon. Jean-Luc Pepin (Minister of Transport): Madam Speaker, I am not sure I understand the question. Maybe the member and I could have a conversation later.

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CANADIAN TRANSPORT COMMISSION

CONDUCT OF RAIL LINE ABANDONMENT HEARINGS

Mr. Arnold Malone (Crowfoot): Madam Speaker, I have a question for the Minister of Transport. It deals with the process by which the rail line abandonment hearings are initiated and conducted. As the Minister knows, either CN or CP rail have as much time as they deem necessary, perhaps even years, to present the case that they believe a branch line ought to be abandoned. Having come to this conclusion, they then submit to the CTC an appeal for abandonment. After all of that period which the railway companies have, does the Minister judge it to be fair that the communities along those railway lines are then given as little as 30 days in which to prepare a case to defend themselves against the railways, against something which affects the life of the communities? Indeed, it is the umbilical cord of their economic life for the remainder of the existence of those communities.

Hon. Jean-Luc Pepin (Minister of Transport): Madam Speaker, I have no way of judging whether 30 days is too long or not. I do know that these hearings take a very long time. Usually the community is quite aware of what is going on. Without being theoretical, I would think that 30 days after the decision is made would constitute a sufficient time in view of the existing awareness in the community.

REQUEST THAT AFFECTED COMMUNITIES BE GRANTED PROFESSIONAL ASSISTANCE

Mr. Arnold Malone (Crowfoot): Madam Speaker, I have a supplementary question for the Minister of Transport, setting aside for a moment the fact that he presumes 30 days is long enough for these communities, many of which have a population of 100 or less. And bearing in mind that when the Commissioners enter the hearing room, which is referred to as a judicial court and is court-like in style, there is a battery of lawyers, accountants and other experts for the Commissioners, in what other court situation is it the judge who has the lawyers and the expertise?

If the communities are the defendants, why does the Government of Canada not grant to the individual communities across the Prairies the money or the experts so that the communities can have the expertise to bring an appropriate defence, rather than the judge having the assistance, against the slick CN and CP Rail with their lawyers, accountants and economists? These communities of 100 people have only 30 days and no expertise. Can the Minister justify that behaviour?