

Oral Questions

within the Canadian forces, an inquiry that will ensure it is the harasser and not the victim who is being punished.

Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister): I have just responded to my hon. friend in French and I can assure my hon. friend that the seriousness of this problem—

An hon. member: She understands French very well. It just was not a good enough answer.

Mr. Mulroney: Oh, I see.

Mr. Harvard: Like David Milford.

Mr. Mulroney: Mr. Speaker, given the seriousness of the question raised by my hon. friend, I would have thought that her colleagues in the Liberal opposition would have wanted to hear the answer without interruption.

The matter raised by my hon. friend has been given the highest priority by the Minister of National Defence. She will pursue this matter as vigorously as she pursued similar matters when she was Minister of Justice. I am sure the report that she will be able to make to my hon. friend in the House is one that she will find satisfying because we are in the process of dealing with this very serious matter.

Mrs. Beryl Gaffney (Nepean): Mr. Speaker, does the Prime Minister not realize that women in the Canadian forces see how other women are treated when they complain? They quickly learn to suffer in silence.

Will the Prime Minister immediately establish a process totally outside the military that will review any and all cases of sexual harassment, a process that will finally give women a fair hearing?

Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, I apologize to my hon. friend that I am not *au courant* of the latest developments in the last number of hours that the minister has been working on. I can say that in general I support what my hon. friend has said. If there is a presumption to exist, the presumption is one of innocence and one of support in favour of the complainant.

There should exist a climate wherein a woman who makes an allegation of sexual harassment should be able to do so with all of the benefits of that presumption and in a climate which gives her the opportunity to bring this

forward without reprisal and without the possibility of intimidation of any kind.

That is what we are working for and these are the procedures that the Minister of National Defence and the Minister Responsible for the Status of Women are pursuing. My expectation is that the Minister of National Defence will soon be able to give my hon. friend that assurance formally.

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• (1440)

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION AGENCY

Mr. Iain Angus (Thunder Bay—Atikokan): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Transport.

When the Minister of Transport tabled the NTA review commission report last week in this House, he sent it to the transport committee for a public review. Yet on Friday the government appointed the author of that report, Mr. Gilles Rivard, to take over the National Transportation Agency, an individual who has clearly made up his mind on the direction of transportation policy in this country.

Given his recommendations, including increased foreign ownership and ripping up more rail lines, how can the minister believe that Mr. Rivard will be the impartial chair of this quasi-judicial agency?

Hon. Jean Corbeil (Minister of Transport): Mr. Speaker, if the implication is that nobody should have a clear mind in order to become president of that agency, I think he is completely wrong.

This man is very qualified. He made a review of the NTA with four other colleagues that were as well qualified. I do not see anything in that which would disqualify him from becoming the chairman of the NTA.

Mr. Iain Angus (Thunder Bay—Atikokan): Mr. Speaker, this is not a question of the philosophy of the individual, it is a question of the fact that Mr. Rivard has already passed judgment on matters that are before the NTA.

The application to acquire one-third of the ownership of Canadian Airlines by AMR, CN's application to sell its main line from Truro to Sydney, CP's application to abandon all of Atlantic Canada are all matters dealt with in the Rivard commission report.