

Oral Questions

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Wilson (Etobicoke Centre): Members opposite do not understand that.

Mr. Crawford: They do not believe it.

Mr. Wilson (Etobicoke Centre): It demonstrates very clearly that people in provinces like Newfoundland, his own province, will be much better off as a result of this new sales tax.

* * *

NATIONAL DEFENCE**USE OF TRACKER AIRCRAFT**

Mr. Joe McGuire (Egmont): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of National Defence. Yesterday, a spokesman for DND, Captain Rick Jones, said that the tracker aircraft had a military role in that: "They were doing coastal surveillance with a particular effort for the Department of Fisheries on fisheries patrols".

How does the Department of National Defence intend to provide this military role if the trackers are taken out of service? Can the Minister assure the fishermen in the Gulf of St. Lawrence that the industry will be protected, especially in view of the fact that France is now robbing us blind in that area?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Bill McKnight (Minister of National Defence): Mr. Speaker, the Hon. Member knows, as would the captain if he had been asked, that the tracker aircraft will have to be retrofitted within the next 18 months to 20 months. Right now the engines and the fuel needed are very scarce and hard to acquire.

With a \$2.74 billion reduction in the budget of the Department of National Defence, the money is not available to retrofit the tracker aircraft. Therefore, the two squadrons which are based in Summerside will be phased out.

Ms. Clancy: So much for the fishermen!

CLOSURE OF CFB SUMMERSIDE

Mr. Joe McGuire (Egmont): Mr. Speaker, there is a need for a fisheries patrol off the Atlantic Coast. There is a need for patrols of the drug smuggling that goes through eastern Canada. If Search and Rescue remains in P.E.I. new facilities will have to be built.

The Minister knows he will not save one red cent by closing CFB Summerside. Why is the Government blindly going ahead in closing the base at Summerside?

Hon. Bill McKnight (Minister of National Defence): Mr. Speaker, I can again inform the Hon. Member about the advice I received when I found the reduction of \$2.74 billion in the budget of National Defence as to the economies that could be made without jeopardizing defence efficiency and defence readiness. Those decisions were made by my military advisers. I believe that they are good advisers. I believe they know their job. I believe they are competent.

The Hon. Member should be aware that the Aurora aircraft that DND has continues to fly out of Maritime Command.

* * *

DANGEROUS PRODUCTS**RCMP INVESTIGATION INTO TAINTED FUELS**

Mr. Jim Fulton (Skeena): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of the Environment who said a few moments ago that the Government does not contact newspapers to get information, that that is not the general practice of Government. The Government knew, had some hint, of the movement of tainted toxic products across the Canada-U.S. border a month ago.

Would the Minister of the Environment explain why then under the jurisdiction of the Solicitor General yesterday morning after *The Globe and Mail* came out with the banner headline the Government through the RCMP contacted Jock Ferguson from *The Globe and Mail* to get information?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Lucien Bouchard (Minister of the Environment): Mr. Speaker, I want the Hon. Member to read my lips. We did not receive specific allegations, nor any hint of illegal crossing of tainted fuel from the States.

I want to take advantage of this occasion to clear up some information I just gave. It was not one of my aides but a civil servant from my Department who received the general information from Mr. Green.

TIMING OF NOTICE RESPECTING TAINTED FUELS

Mr. Jim Fulton (Skeena): Mr. Speaker, could the Minister of the Environment be somewhat more clear with the House of Commons and the people of Canada? When exactly did the Minister know that there was a possibility of toxic materials coming across the border