

Oral Questions

place, because French-speaking eastern members are just as interested as the others in this matter?

[*English*]

Hon. Alastair Gillespie (Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources): Mr. Speaker, I shall make every effort to see that it is available for the House. While I cannot promise it, I can assure the hon. member that I will make the strongest possible representations to the National Energy Board that they supply that information.

On the first part of the hon. member's question dealing with the annual report of AECL, today I talked to the acting chief executive officer with regard to expediting the French copies of the report, and I hope we will be able to provide them to the House very shortly.

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POLYSAR

ALERTING OF COUNTRIES WHOSE CITIZENS ACCEPTED
KICKBACKS—REASON FOR ALLEGED FAILURE TO INVESTIGATE
COMPLAINT OF AUDITOR GENERAL

Mr. Don Mazankowski (Vegreville): Mr. Speaker, I should like to direct my question to the Prime Minister. It arises out of the second report of the Public Accounts Committee, commonly referred to now as the Polysar report. The committee concluded that in its opinion Polysar had engaged in improper business practices which were designed to break foreign laws on tax evasion, currency control and fraud. This, by implication, makes the government of Canada, parliament and the people of Canada unwitting accomplices in the commission of crimes against countries friendly to our own. I wonder whether the Prime Minister would advise the House what steps the government is taking to alert the home governments of these Polysar customers engaged in the rebate practices as to the names, dates of involvement and amounts, of cash rebated in each case of improper kickbacks?

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, I have not read the report of the committee, which I understood was brought down last week while I was travelling in the fair provinces of British Columbia and Alberta, and I am not yet informed as to what disposition will be made.

Mr. Mazankowski: A supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. It is encouraging to note that the Prime Minister is not going to leave this decision to the executive of the Crown corporation. The committee also stated that the investigation of the former minister of public works, the hon. member for Westmount, was inadequate and in the same paragraph notes that there was no response to Mr. Henderson's letters, the former auditor general. May I ask the Prime Minister whether this reluctance to reply to Mr. Henderson's letter was a matter of policy, or did the Prime Minister feel that he had no responsibility or obligation to ensure that this extremely important matter would be followed up, a matter about which the auditor general felt compelled to write directly to the Prime Minister?

[*Mr. Gauthier (Roberval).*]

Mr. Trudeau: Mr. Speaker, I repeat that I have not read the report to which the hon. member refers, but my recollection of events is that the auditor general felt it important enough to write to me but not to put it in his report to parliament. Secondly, I think my recollection is right that he was no longer auditor general within a very short period of time after I had received this letter.

Mr. Mazankowski: Mr. Speaker, my supplementary is simply this: did the Prime Minister not feel he had an obligation to follow up this very important matter? Did he feel satisfied leaving it in the hands of the former minister of public works, now the hon. member for Westmount? Is he saying that he ignored the letter and left it entirely up to the former minister of public works?

Mr. Trudeau: Mr. Speaker, several months ago I answered these questions, perhaps as much as a year ago. I made it quite clear that I saw the Auditor General's letter and was somewhat dismayed by it. I wrote the former minister of public works and asked him to follow it up. I believe these letters were tabled at the time. This is the way I generally run my government, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Baker (Grenville-Carleton): It shows.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Trudeau: I am glad to see the opposition finds that it shows. This is the reason our cabinet does not fall apart, as happens on the opposite side.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Allan Lawrence (Northumberland-Durham): Mr. Speaker, if I may further refresh the Prime Minister's memory, in the Prime Minister's letter to the then president of the treasury board he asked for the president of the treasury board to investigate and report back to him. The evidence presented in the Public Accounts Committee is that the then president of the treasury board never did. If the Prime Minister runs his cabinet and his office this way, may I simply ask him what provision he is making to make sure that when he asks for a report he gets it?

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Trudeau: Mr. Speaker, I am sure, as with the hon. member's office, that there is some provision for bringing items forward and seeing that they are followed up.

Mr. Lawrence: After six years?

Mr. Trudeau: In this case perhaps somebody did ascertain from the then minister of public works that he had contacted Polysar and that he had been given assurances which were then made part of the record.