

Oral Questions

Hon. Michael Wilson (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, I welcome this opportunity to announce to the House a drop in the bank rate to 7.74 per cent, the best and lowest rate since 1977!

[English]

This record low since 1977 will help us create more jobs in this country and have more housing starts right across the country.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

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[Translation]

THE ADMINISTRATION

OBTAINING OF INFORMATION RELATING TO AWARDING OF LOW LEVEL AIR DEFENCE CONTRACT

Mr. Jacques Guilbault (Saint-Jacques): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Prime Minister. Today, the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation was denied access by the Department of Supply and Services to all information on the Low Level Air Defence contract. The Corporation's correspondent was told that employees had instructions from the Minister's office not to release any information whatsoever on this matter. I would like to ask the Prime Minister why his Government is denying the media, and thus the public, access to information about a contract that is in the public domain. What is his Government trying to hide?

[English]

In other words, why the cover-up?

[Translation]

Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, the Government's position is crystal clear. The facts that were brought to our attention were immediately transmitted to the RCMP, which is conducting a general and important inquiry on this matter. All information available to the Government has been transmitted to the RCMP, and more will follow if necessary and as more facts become available. I think that is quite normal. Our legal advisers have told us this is the way to proceed. It is legitimate and will help the cause and exercise of justice in this country.

REQUEST THAT LEGAL OPINIONS BE TABLED

Mr. Jacques Guilbault (Saint-Jacques): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister claimed that his Government is crystal clear. Let him prove it! Let him table in the House the legal advice on the basis of which he claims that a judicial inquiry would prejudice the inquiry being conducted by the RCMP on the Saint-Jean "land flip". Let him table those documents and the legal advice of the law officers of the Crown! Is he prepared to do so?

Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, I was advised by Mr. Paul Tellier, Clerk of the Privy Council, and by his senior legal adviser, that according to the highest legal counsel for the Government and the Public Service—and as I mentioned this morning—setting up such a commission here and now might seriously jeopardize the conducting of a comprehensive inquiry and could even have the effect of inhibiting and impeding the prosecution of individuals. That is the information I received and the information I gave the House.

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[English]

ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS

ACID RAIN—PRIME MINISTER'S DISCUSSIONS WITH UNITED STATES VICE-PRESIDENT

Mr. Bill Blaikie (Winnipeg—Birds Hill): Mr. Speaker, the fact remains that in the Manitoba case referred to by the Prime Minister there had been no resignation of a Minister and there were no allegations of a conflict of interest.

My question for the Prime Minister concerns an entirely different subject, yesterday's visit to Canada by Vice-President Bush. As a result of his conversation with Vice-President Bush, does he now have any reasonable expectation that President Reagan will seek to amend his budget to bring it into compliance with the recommendations of the Davis-Lewis accord?

Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, we fully expect that the recommendations in the report of the envoys on acid rain will be fully respected and honoured. We received a commitment from the administration to that effect, and we reminded them of it. The Minister of the Environment and the Secretary of State for External Affairs spelled out in direct terms the manner in which these obligations had to be met. We fully expect that they shall.

Mr. Speaker: The Hon. Member for Winnipeg—Birds Hill commenced his preamble to his question with an observation which the Chair, being generous, would let go in some circumstances. However, I think the Chair must comment on the fact that the observation was utterly unrelated to the question being asked. I know the Hon. Member would not want to bootleg in comments not dealing with this specific matter.

Mr. Blaikie: Never, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: I ask the Hon. Member to pose his supplementary question succinctly.

COMMITMENT BY UNITED STATES

Mr. Bill Blaikie (Winnipeg—Birds Hill): Mr. Speaker, did the Prime Minister get a commitment yesterday, not one going back to the Summit, that President Reagan's budget would be