

Oral Questions

the hon. member in making those kinds of statements because they are entirely inaccurate. First of all, books for education, libraries, and so on, are not taxable. She makes it sound as if books are being taxed out of existence; that is just not true.

The Minister of Finance has made a specific commitment regarding books and the minister will keep that commitment, but he is not going to change the GST at this time. It is to be passed and implemented on January 1. Again, I encourage the hon. member to speak to her friends up in the Senate, to bring them to their senses, to pass this bill as quickly as possible, so that businesses throughout Canada which have adjusted to the tax will not be losing hundreds and hundreds of thousands of dollars by the delay.

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NATIONAL DEFENCE

Mr. Maurice A. Dionne (Miramichi): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of National Defence. The minister is well aware, of course, that the low-level air defence capability for the Armed Forces is in some jeopardy with regard to the absence of a firing range near the base at Chatham. I want to ask the minister if he will assure the people of New Brunswick today that the firing range will remain in New Brunswick.

Hon. Bill McKnight (Minister of National Defence): Mr. Speaker, I have had communications with the premier of the province of New Brunswick, expressing to him the concern we have had over the apparent reluctance of the citizens in the area which he is referring to, around Chatham, in accepting the range. He knows full well, Mr. Speaker, that at this time there is an environmental assessment being done.

He also knows full well that the discussions we have had with the province of New Brunswick called for more than just a firing range. The province of New Brunswick is asking for some \$25 million—plus to be provided, and to acquire a firing range and to retain low-level air defence. He also knows that the Department of National Defence has had a reduction in its budget. We are trying to make every effort we can to make sure we use those dollars efficiently. I cannot give the member the assurance he asks for.

Mr. Maurice A. Dionne (Miramichi): Mr. Speaker, I could take 15 minutes, which you would now allow me, to

answer some of the allegations the minister has made. In any case, I want to ask him if he is aware that the economy of New Brunswick is very much wrapped up in this situation. Will the minister give us a commitment now that the firing range at Gagetown, which is being used by Americans, could be considered as a firing range for the low-level air defence operation at Chatham?

Hon. Bill McKnight (Minister of National Defence): Mr. Speaker, I agree with the hon. member that the contribution made by the Department of National Defence to the province of New Brunswick is indeed substantial.

I draw to his attention the construction of six Canadian patrol frigates that are taking place in that province today. I draw to his attention additional construction that will take place with the Canadian patrol frigates in his province, plus billions of dollars involved in these contracts. I can also assure the hon. member that the area that he is referring to is not of a sufficient size to test the low-level air defence weaponry that he is talking about. I can assure the hon. member that that range is being used as it is now to its fullest. Unless he wishes to jeopardize the operation of CFB Gagetown, I suggest he not talk about this any further.

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CAMECO

Mr. Ray Funk (Prince Albert—Churchill River): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Energy. This morning in Saskatoon, Cameco, a company for which the minister is responsible, changed its plea from not guilty to guilty to provincial charges arising from the spill of 2 million litres of radioactive waste into Wollaston Lake last November. Since Cameco also pleaded guilty to federal charges last December, this means there is no mechanism left for the public to get answers to questions like: what was the role of the regulators in this fiasco? What impact is this industry having on northern people and their environment? Does the 1946 legislation, which governs this industry, have any relevance in today's world?

Therefore, I would like to ask the minister if he is now prepared to reconsider his own decision and request a public inquiry into this whole matter so that the public can finally get at all the facts.