

Oral Questions

He will discover that those reports cover a number of issues of a general nature such as equipment, operations—

Mr. Nielsen: What about seaworthiness?

Mr. Lalonde:—covering a wide aspect. The certificates of seaworthiness are issued by international organizations so recognized by the International Maritime Council Organization, IMCO. In this particular instance they were issued by the American Bureau of Shipping, an internationally recognized organization which is responsible for certifying the seaworthiness of ships or shipping installations carrying the American flag.

SAFETY TRAINING AND REGULATIONS

Mr. Sid Parker (Kootenay East-Revelstoke): Madam Speaker, my question is also to the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources. Yesterday he indicated to the House that the safety of workers on ocean rigs fell under federal jurisdiction and was exercised under the Canada Oil and Gas Act. He indicated that he was satisfied with the work carried out under that act. Surely, then, the federal government must also have been aware that in June, 1980, organized labour in Newfoundland issued a report which said that most workers on oil rigs had no right to negotiate safety issues, and which called for much stronger health and safety regulations, inspection and training on the oil rigs, and also called for the workers to be placed under the protection of the health and safety legislation of Newfoundland.

In view of these problems which have been public for two years, and the recent tragedy, could the minister tell the House what steps he has taken to ensure adequate safety inspections and training, and will he table in the House relevant sections of the agreements with the oil companies dealing with safety, as well as safety training manuals used, and reports indicating what sort of inspections were done and what was found?

Hon. Marc Lalonde (Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources): Madam Speaker, first of all the hon. member raises the question of the unionization of those workers. Obviously that is a decision for the workers to take under the laws of Canada, or the laws of Newfoundland if those laws apply. As the hon. member knows, this matter is before the courts at the present time and I cannot prejudge the conclusions of the court.

We have taken the view, as the federal government, that we have the responsibility and jurisdiction, and we have acted accordingly. Whether the courts will confirm this is not for me to decide at the present time.

• (1430)

As far as the question raised by the hon. member is concerned, for the time being I will merely refer him to Section 8 of the Canada oil and gas drilling regulations which go very extensively into all the requirements which are exacted from applicants who want to go ahead with a drilling program.

There he will find all the questions which the one who proposes to drill is required to answer.

Concerning the details the hon. member is requesting, I suggest to him that this would more properly be a matter which should be examined by the commission of inquiry which the Acting Prime Minister and the Minister of Transport announced yesterday.

Mr. Parker: I was not referring to the unionization of these people. I was referring to a report presented by the Newfoundland and Labrador Federation of Labour, dated June 2, 1980, describing their concerns.

INVESTIGATION OF DRILLING RIG OWNERS

Mr. Sid Parker (Kootenay East-Revelstoke): Madam Speaker, my supplementary question is also directed to the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources. Given the fact that the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources indicated in the House yesterday and today that he was satisfied that safety laws were adequate in the case of the *Ocean Ranger* and that inspections were adequate, and given the fact that it is unlikely that the minister would try to shift the blame for the tragedy onto the unfortunate crew members, could the minister tell the House if he is prepared to urge that a criminal investigation be undertaken to determine the possibility of criminal negligence on the part of the owners of the vessel with respect to their handling of maintenance, design and training, and to pursue charges if negligence is suspected?

Hon. Marc Lalonde (Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources): Madam Speaker, the hon. member is attributing statements to me which are not quite correct, and I suggest that he look back to the record of yesterday. I indicated that we, as the federal government, had responsibility for the inspection, and that to my knowledge inspections had been carried on regularly and according to the rules. I can confirm today that those inspections were indeed carried out, and today I have the last two reports.

Mr. Nowlan: Not for seaworthiness.

Mr. Lalonde: Concerning the point raised by the hon. member, we have indicated that there will be a full-scale inquiry into this particular tragedy, and out of that inquiry I am sure that conclusions will be reached. If there is critical liability or criminal liability which might be involved, I assume that this will be the subject of a conclusion by that commission of inquiry. At the present time I would not want to prejudge who is responsible or liable in a particular instance. I think it would be very premature to attribute blame to any particular party.

Mr. Parker: I would like to thank the minister for his assurance that he will pursue it and do it with an open mind.