

Oral Questions

interested in railways. I am particularly surprised because my hon. friend is known as a multi-modalist. He has been a defender of a multi-modal station in Regina, which seems to incorporate the best of multi-modal attitudes.

Mr. Benjamin: Madam Speaker, it would be great if Voyageur Bus Lines were in favour of co-operating with VIA Rail, but what the minister is doing now is like putting a coyote in charge of the chicken coop. This is a company which has roadblocked every move with respect to railway fares and with respect to co-operation with VIA Rail regarding schedules.

An hon. Member: Guess who owns it?

Mr. Benjamin: It is owned by Power Corporation of Canada.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Benjamin: One Paul Martin lobbied Members of Parliament because he thought VIA Rail fares were too low.

Madam Speaker: Order. Will the hon. member ask his question?

Mr. Benjamin: I want to ask the minister if he can find somebody, somewhere in Canada or anywhere else in the world, who knows something about high speed intercity rail passenger traffic to appoint to this important position and do something about strengthening and enlarging that branch of his department, since air transport has three pages of listings in the government directory and rail transport has one inch?

Mr. Pepin: Madam Speaker, a moment ago the Minister of Finance was trying to teach cabinet government to one of the hon. member's colleagues. I will now have to teach the hon. member something about public administration in Canada. I heard about this appointment this afternoon when I was coming here. This is done under law by the Public Service Commission of Canada. I am in no way influencing the choice which has been made.

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ENVIRONMENT**POLLUTION OF NIAGARA RIVER—REPRESENTATIONS TO UNITED STATES AUTHORITIES**

Mr. Joe Reid (St. Catharines): Madam Speaker, in the absence of the Right Hon. Prime Minister I would like to direct my question to the minister responsible for the environment of Canada.

Since the hon. member for Niagara Falls has thrown up his hands in his fight against the further pollution of the Niagara River and has indicated that it is now up to an exchange between high level authorities in the United States and Canadian governments to protect the quality of that river, will the minister indicate to this House what action the Prime Minister has taken or his government has taken to follow

through on the Prime Minister's promise made a year ago that he would urge U.S. authorities to stop SCA from further dumping in the Niagara River?

Hon. John Roberts (Minister of State for Science and Technology and Minister of the Environment): Madam Speaker, I take issue with the first part of the hon. member's statement. There has been no member of this House and, indeed, no person I know who has been more active and vigorous in promoting the cause of the clean-up of the Niagara River than the hon. member for Niagara Falls.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Roberts: His record in that regard deserves the approbation of hon. members of this House.

We have consistently urged on American authorities that permits not be given for the SCA discharge until there has been a significant decrease in the present polluting activities with respect to the Niagara River. We are particularly concerned about the Niagara Falls, New York, sewage treatment plant. Our position on that has not been altered, and we have on a variety of occasions as vigorously as possible expressed our views to the American authorities.

Mr. Reid (St. Catharines): Madam Speaker, that response is such that I have to wonder why there was a negative response to my motion under Standing Order 43.

In view of the fact that the International Joint Commission has recommended a halt to the further discharge of chemical wastes into the Niagara River, do the minister and his government not now take the position that the International Joint Commission should be supported in its position and its recommendations followed?

Mr. Roberts: Madam Speaker, we have done so in the past, we do so now, and I am sure we will continue to do so in the future.

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PIPELINES**DISCUSSIONS WITH UNITED STATES RESPECTING ALASKA HIGHWAY PROJECT**

Mr. Gilbert Parent (Welland): Madam Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources. Now that the new administration in the United States is settling in, and in view of the fact that 80 per cent of the pipe which will be manufactured for the pipeline in Canada will be manufactured in the Welland constituency, I wonder if the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources could tell us if he has had any contact with the American secretary in charge of energy or the pipeline with regard to the Alaska Highway gas pipeline project, and would he share whatever information he has with this House?

Hon. Marc Lalonde (Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources): Madam Speaker, I believe I have already