

Oral Questions

make available to these private firms the documents in their possession to assist them in a full and proper defence?

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Madam Speaker, I will be happy to take note of the question and discuss it with the Minister of Justice who is here today.

Mr. Hnatyshyn: Madam Speaker, the Prime Minister may not understand this, but the Minister of Justice is involved in the prosecution of these companies. The other arm of government is involved in the defence. The Prime Minister should consult with members of his cabinet because he has more men of conviction in his cabinet than any other Prime Minister in the history of this country.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

REQUEST THAT DOCUMENTS BE DECLASSIFIED

Hon. Ray Hnatyshyn (Saskatoon West): Madam Speaker, the Crown corporations are immune from prosecution and the remaining defendants are at a clear disadvantage in obtaining the evidence they require for a full defence. Therefore, will the Minister of Justice, or the Prime Minister, agree not to invoke the provisions of Section 41(2) of the Federal Court Act which will prevent the introduction of government documents as evidence in court? In addition, will the minister agree to declassify all government documents in this case so that the private corporations can have access to them for a proper defence?

Hon. Jean Chrétien (Minister of Justice and Minister of State for Social Development): Madam Speaker, I do not think I want to debate these questions which are in front of the court at this time. The argument the hon. member makes is in relation to a case which is in front of the courts at this very moment. It is for the lawyers there to put their arguments to the court.

Mr. Clark: It is not sub judice.

Mr. Chrétien: If there is some ruling by the judge in this case we will advise accordingly, but at this moment the question is between lawyers in front of the court. It is up to the court to decide; it is not for the Minister of Justice to pass judgment at this moment.

STATUS OF FUTURE ENERGY CROWN CORPORATIONS

Hon. Perrin Beatty (Wellington-Dufferin-Simcoe): Madam Speaker, my supplementary is to the President of the Treasury Board who is responsible for drawing up a comprehensive Crown corporation policy. In light of the fact that the decision in the Uranium Canada and Eldorado case is that they are agents of Her Majesty and therefore immune from criminal prosecution, is it the policy of the government, supported by the minister, that all new energy Crown corporations should

automatically be made agents of Her Majesty and thereby be given immunity from criminal prosecution?

Hon. Donald J. Johnston (President of the Treasury Board): Madam Speaker, that question is rather unrelated to the direct responsibilities—

Some hon. Members: No, no!

Mr. Johnston: —I have had in terms of comprehensive Crown corporation policies. The issues I have addressed and discussed with the hon. member on a number of occasions are control, direction, and accountability of these corporations.

Mr. Clark: Except before the courts.

Mr. Johnston: With respect to the specific question he raises, I suggest he take it up with the Minister of Justice or the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources.

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BANKS AND BANKING

STATUS AND POWERS OF INSPECTOR GENERAL OF BANKS

Hon. Ron Huntington (Capilano): Madam Speaker, in the absence of the Minister of Finance I will address my question to the Minister of State (Finance). In his reply to my question yesterday the Minister of Finance said he was in close touch with the Inspector General of Banks and that he had no reason to believe that any of the banks operating within the Canadian system are not in a viable position, and he believed that each of them is viable in the circumstances, whatever that means. If that statement were true, why would the chief executive officer of the Bank of Montreal describe many banks in the Canadian banking system as beached whales, and say that Canadians may have to turn to foreign banks to finance Canadian projects?

I ask the minister is he or the Minister of Finance satisfied that the Inspector General of Banks has the status, resources and authority to give the necessary attention and supervision to the Canadian banking system?

[Translation]

Hon. Pierre Bussières (Minister of State (Finance)): Madam Speaker, in the preamble to this question, the hon. member referred to comments by an officer of the Bank of Montreal. If the hon. member is seeking clarification of these comments, I would recommend that he put his question to the author and not to the Minister of Finance.

As for the hon. member's principal question, namely, does the office of the Inspector General of Banks have enough staff and expertise to perform its duties under the provisions of the Bank Act. As far as I know the answer is yes, and I am not aware that the Inspector General of Banks has asked for more resources to do the office's work.