

Oral Questions

at the same time we do not see these rates being passed along by the chartered banks as quickly as when the rates go up. Why are these decreases not passed along to the consumers as quickly as are the increases? Why does a four-point spread still exist?

Hon. Michael Wilson (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, quite rightly, with some enthusiasm the Hon. Member notes the drop in interest rates in Canada over the past three or four months.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Wilson (Etobicoke Centre): I have been watching the spreads between the bank rate and the bank prime rate. The spread is not four points, but less than that. I think it is something in the order of two points. However, during the month of January it was narrower than normal. It is now somewhat wider than normal. I am watching the matter very closely. As we monitor the situation I think we can expect that some alleviation will occur and that we will have a drop in rates.

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EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

CANADA-UNITED STATES RELATIONS—HIRING OF LOBBYIST

Mr. George Baker (Gander—Twillingate): Mr. Speaker, since the Government came to power we have heard the Prime Minister continually sing the praises of the ever deepening friendship with the United States. In the absence of the Secretary of State for External Affairs my question—not about specifics—is for the Deputy Prime Minister. Given this new glowing friendship, does the Minister believe it is necessary to spend over \$100,000 of Canadian taxpayers' money to hire one American to promote Canadian interests in the United States? Has our policy come down to "Leave it to Deaver"?

Hon. Erik Nielsen (Acting Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, the short answer to the latter part of the hon. gentleman's statement, or question—however it might be described—is no. I think that it is a reality, a fact of life these days in which we are now living that there are lobbyists here in Canada, as well as elsewhere in the western world. To my recollection, that has been the situation for at least 15 years or more. So I can see nothing improper with recognizing the process of lobbying.

I might point out as well—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

HIRING INQUIRY

Mr. George Baker (Gander—Twillingate): Mr. Speaker, the Canadian people have a right to know what Mr. Deaver did or promised to do to earn that massive salary of over

\$100,000. Are there other dealers—excuse me, Deavers—on the Canadian payroll?

Hon. Erik Nielsen (Acting Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, that was one of the first matters which the Government decided required some attention. Therefore, as he well knows, as part of that September 9 package, again, the question of lobbyists was addressed. There is a paper which is before a committee. I understand that House Leaders have discussed the registry of lobbyists. All of these matters are now in train. We believe that there should be that type of public disclosure available with respect to lobbyists in the system.

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AIRPORTS

SECURITY CONTRACT AT DORVAL AND MIRABEL

Mr. Les Benjamin (Regina West): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Transport. As I understand it, Burns Security Services at Dorval and Mirabel Airports are being replaced, or have been replaced. Has the Minister's Department or have the airlines awarded a contract, or are they in the process of awarding a contract, to Metropole Security Ltd. for airport security at Dorval and Mirabel Airports? Did he or any of his officials carry out any investigation of Metropole Security Ltd.?

Hon. Don Mazankowski (Minister of Transport): Mr. Speaker, the answer to the first part of the question is no. My information is that Metropole Security Ltd. is not employed by Air Canada but that the firms of Metropole Airport Security Services Ltd. and Metropole Base-Fort Airport Security Services Ltd. are, in fact, employed by Air Canada. Yes, there was an investigation made as to the ownership of these companies by the Department of Transport.

AWARDING OF CONTRACT

Mr. Les Benjamin (Regina West): Mr. Speaker, was the provision of these security services tendered? Is Air Canada in a consortium with other airlines or is this arrangement only with Air Canada? Did any—I repeat any—of his cabinet colleagues have any discussion with him or any officials in his Department at any time about the provision of security services at those airports?

Hon. Don Mazankowski (Minister of Transport): Mr. Speaker, I am not aware of any such discussions, other than the fact that Burns Security Services indicated its intention to withdraw from providing that service. Air Canada undertook to make arrangements with the other two firms.