

Oral Questions

American and Canadian carriers engaged in international transportation. As a matter of fact, because of the difference in the exchange rate between Canadian and U.S. dollars, Canadian operators already benefit and have a very significant advantage resulting from the lower value of the Canadian dollar versus the U.S. dollar. They are in a good position to compete if they run their businesses efficiently.

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PENITENTIARIES

UNITED CHURCH MODERATOR'S REPORT ON AFTERMATH OF ARCHAMBAULT RIOT

Mr. Svend J. Robinson (Burnaby): Madam Speaker, my question is directed to the Solicitor General. Late last week the respected Moderator of the United Church of Canada released a report containing very serious allegations of torture and brutality on the part of a small number of guards at Archambault Prison following the tragic deaths there in the July 25 riot.

In view of the fact that this report by the Right Rev. MacDonald repeats earlier allegations by Charles Kolb of the International Human Rights Law Group, which the Minister glibly dismissed as sensational, is the Minister now prepared to order a full, independent, public inquiry into these very serious charges of brutality and lawlessness at Archambault institution?

Hon. Bob Kaplan (Solicitor General): Madam Speaker, I do not agree at all with the characterization which the Hon. Member has given to the new MacDonald report. In fact the allegations of torture and brutality were not supported by the MacDonald report; they were referred to without indicating in any way whether the Moderator agreed or disagreed with them. I am looking forward to meeting him. I found the report a sincere one. I would very much like to have that meeting.

● (1440)

In the meanwhile, one additional step that I would like to take across the whole Correctional Service of Canada is to require that if and when an incident of the sort that took place at Archambault ever takes place again, the ombudsman of the inmates, that is, the correctional investigator, be called in at once and be present as much as possible during the incident and during its aftermath, not only as a curb on the possibility of such events actually occurring, but also as a curb on and confirmation of allegations which are made subsequently, from an independent source, of what actually did take place during the incident.

Mr. Robinson (Burnaby): Madam Speaker, once again we have the Minister trying to cover up responsibility for wrongdoing at Archambault, just as he did at Dorchester two years ago when there were allegations of beatings and gassings.

Clearly the prison system in Canada is in a state of crisis today. We have seen it right across the country.

REQUEST FOR COMMITTEE STUDY OF LENGTHY SENTENCING PRACTICE

Mr. Svend J. Robinson (Burnaby): Madam Speaker, in view of the obvious problems which have been identified by prisoners, prison guards and, indeed, a former Liberal Solicitor General, with the mandatory provision for a 25 year sentence without eligibility for parole, is the Minister prepared to recommend that the Justice Committee study fully and comprehensively in the near future the ramifications of the 25 year sentence before we see further outbreaks of violence in the Canadian prison system?

Hon. Bob Kaplan (Solicitor General): Madam Speaker, as to the suggestion that this hostage-taking incident proves a deterioration taking place in the Correctional Service of Canada, I think the statistics show quite the opposite. In fact the number of hostage takings which have occurred so far this year, as regrettable as each of them is, is below the number which has taken place in any year since 1974. As the Hon. Member very well knows, a very important measure of stability in the institutions, that is, the measure of major incidents, is down by 50 per cent from what it was prior to 1980. I think a serious look at the Correctional Service of Canada would show improvement, not deterioration.

As to his suggestion that the 25 year sentences should be reviewed, I admit that I am concerned about the implications of the 25 year sentence. I am having the Correctional Service and my secretariat look into them, but I think it is far too early to draw conclusions about the impact of the 25 year sentence. I have met, as perhaps my friend has, with 25-year inmates across the system, and I find despair is as much a consideration as extra hostility on the part of these individuals. I would like to know more about them, and I think that with only 171 or so individuals having had that sentence since 1976 it is too early for him to draw horrendous conclusions—

Madam Speaker: Order.

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[Translation]

TRANSPORT

"HUDSON TRANSPORT" ACCIDENT—INQUIRY BY JUDGE HUGESSEN—CONSIDERATION OF RECOMMENDATIONS

Mr. Alexandre Cyr (Gaspé): Madam Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Transport and concerns the inquiry conducted by Justice James Hugessen following the accident with a tanker, the *Hudson Transport*, on the St. Lawrence at Christmas 1981. In his report, Justice Hugessen made forty recommendations regarding operations on board ship, with special emphasis on the crew and on rescue operations in the Gulf. My question is as follows: Could the minister inform us how many recommendations have been accepted and