

AGRICULTURE

NIAGARA-ON-THE-LAKE—CONSTRUCTION OF ANIMAL INSPECTION STATION

Mr. Charles Mayer (Portage-Marquette): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Agriculture. It relates to a situation at Niagara-on-the-Lake where the Department which he heads is presently building an animal inspection station. I am sure he is well aware of it. It is my understanding that the Minister had a visit from local officials in his Windsor office on April 23, and that he personally ordered a halt to the construction on May 1. Yet on checking with the mayor of Niagara-on-the-Lake this morning at approximately eleven o'clock, I was told that construction is still going on. I wonder if the Minister could tell us why construction is still going on this morning in light of the fact that he personally ordered a halt to that construction?

Hon. E. F. Whelan (Minister of Agriculture): Mr. Speaker, the Hon. Member is partly right on some of the things he has stated about this facility. It is an animal inspection station which is being built near the Queenston Bridge, in that area. I am not at all satisfied with the procedure which was followed. I issued an order to stop construction, and I meant it. I told them this morning that I would personally go down there and bulldoze it down if they did not stop.

Mr. Mayer: Mr. Speaker, I will not comment on the "bull". I would just hope that the Minister means what he says, because it is my understanding there are a lot of people upset that, despite the Minister's personal request that construction stop, it is still continuing.

MUNICIPAL REGULATIONS

Mr. Charles Mayer (Portage-Marquette): Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the Minister a more comprehensive question. It is my understanding that the Government spent too much money to buy the land; it is in contravention of municipal and some of the provincial regulations; it has ignored the wishes of the local people, and even today it is ignoring personal requests of the Department. I wonder if the Minister would review the procedures within the Department which locates these kinds of premises or facilities for his Department to see that this kind of thing does not happen again? Surely the Minister can run his Department in such a way that he does not have to go and bulldoze facilities down and therefore waste money which has been spent by the Department?

Hon. E. F. Whelan (Minister of Agriculture): Mr. Speaker, to make it clear, the Hon. Member knows that part of the footings, I believe, are established, and some fresh stone and gravel have been hauled on to the site. That is as far as the construction has gone. We held it up for eight days. Then I understand there was some misunderstanding and they started hauling gravel on to the site again. I talked to my officials this morning and told them that we want this construction stopped

Oral Questions

until we have all the facts on the table about what took place, who did what, and why.

It is not my Department which purchases sites. I am sure the Hon. Member is aware of that. It is the Department of Public Works which purchases sites and looks after building the facilities for us. There has been a need for a long time to have an efficient type of facility because of the horse racing industry and our inspection system. So they decided to go ahead with this facility in that area. As I said, I am not at all satisfied with it. I have a person on the job site at the present time to make sure that no further construction takes place at this time.

It appears to me, Mr. Speaker, that this site, from the evidence I have now, will be moved, either to the Queenston Bridge authority or to the industrial site, where it should have been in the first place. It will be either one or the other.

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BANK ACT

ROYAL BANK'S AUTOMOBILE FINANCING PLAN

Mr. David Orlikow (Winnipeg North): Mr. Speaker, in the absence of the Minister of Finance I would like to direct a question to the Minister of State for Finance. When the Bank Act was last amended, after a great deal of debate, there was a Section which we thought seemed to prohibit banks from getting into the business of leasing cars and small trucks. Now, apparently, the Royal Bank has implemented a plan under which customers can purchase a car or truck, borrow the money from the Royal Bank, and after three years they have the option of paying the rest of the loan and taking possession of the car, or they can just return the car and let the bank take it over.

This is obviously a way of avoiding that provision in the Bank Act, allowing the bank to get into the leasing business through the back door. Is the Minister aware of what is going on? If so, what steps is he taking to stop the banks from doing what they are not permitted to do under the Bank Act?

Hon. Roy MacLaren (Minister of State (Finance)): Mr. Speaker, we have the proposal of the Royal Bank under review at the moment. The first legal opinion we have received is that the financing of the vehicle is a loan and not a lease. It seems, therefore, that there is no question but that what the bank is proceeding to do is legal. However, I would say to the Hon. Member opposite that our study is not yet completed and I would be glad to return to him on this subject at a later date.

● (1150)

REQUEST FOR AMENDING LEGISLATION

Mr. David Orlikow (Winnipeg North): Mr. Speaker, I discussed this matter with the Inspector General yesterday. He told me he had representations from the Canadian auto dealers and the Canadian auto leasers. The preliminary advice he got from the Department of Justice was that this was in fact not a