

## Oral Questions

• (1500)

**Mr. Woolliams:** In light of the fact, as disclosed in a recent *Financial Post* article, that the Liberal leader, Mr. Anderson, who has taken a firm position with respect to this matter, has stated that if the Canadian position is not made known and if it is not firm with respect to whether we intend to entertain or endorse a pipeline the United States will make the decision within 30 days despite Canada—I am thinking of the national interests of Canada—what is the minister's answer to that?

**Mr. Macdonald (Rosedale):** Mr. Speaker, I repeated on the weekend—I am glad I had the hon. member as an audience—to all Canadians, as I have repeatedly said in the last year or so, that we would indeed entertain such an application. However, because of the National Energy Board Act and the jurisdiction of the board, of course no government of Canada is in the position to give an advance commitment that such pipeline may be built. We would, however, entertain such an application.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

## UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

BENEFIT CONTROL—ALLEGED STATEMENT BY REFEREES INDICATING WITCH HUNT—REQUEST FOR INVESTIGATION

**Mr. André Fortin (Lotbinière):** Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Minister of Manpower and Immigration.

Is he aware of the very serious charge laid by three referees of the Toronto board of appeals, Mr. Murray Tate, Mr. William Baker and Mr. Henry Weisbach, to the effect that several persons were deprived of their unemployment insurance benefits and were the victims of a real witch hunt and, if so, can he check those facts and report to the House on the appeals procedure to the Unemployment Insurance Commission?

**Mr. Speaker:** I am under the impression that the question has already been put to the minister. In any case, if the minister has something to add to the answer he gave he could be recognized for that purpose.

[English]

**Hon. Robert K. Andras (Minister of Manpower and Immigration):** Mr. Speaker, I just want to confirm that I answered that question earlier in the question period.

\* \* \*

## FLOODS

DAMAGE IN SOUTHWESTERN ONTARIO—REQUEST FOR FEDERAL ASSISTANCE IN ASSESSING PROPERTY LOSS AND IN RECONSTRUCTION

**Mr. H. W. Danforth (Kent-Essex):** Mr. Speaker, I wish to direct my question to the Minister of the Environment, but in his absence and because the concern is shared by the Minister of Agriculture as well I direct this question to him. In view of the second major catastrophe in southwestern Ontario, particularly in Essex and Kent counties, caused by the combination of high water and violent

[Mr. Macdonald (Rosedale).]

storms on the Great Lakes, can the minister say if federal engineers are today working with provincial engineers in assessing the tremendous property loss, and will he say if consideration is now being given to increasing federal aid and accelerating the repair and reconstruction there in view of the continuing danger in the face of spring storms?

**Hon. E. F. Whelan (Minister of Agriculture):** Mr. Speaker, I spent most of the weekend talking to the people in the area and talking to my provincial counterpart, Mr. Stewart, several times. I do hope that both provincial and federal people are in the area today. It is my understanding that this is the fact, although I have not had time to check and find out if they are there. I met with several municipal leaders on Saturday night, and I think there is another meeting scheduled for this coming Saturday afternoon to assess what the damage was and where they should go from here. All I can say is that I am trying to keep in close touch with what is going on and with what we can do to assist those people in their present plight.

DAMAGE IN SOUTHWESTERN ONTARIO—POSSIBILITY OF FLOOD INSURANCE PROGRAM

**Mr. Mark MacGuigan (Windsor-Walkerville):** Mr. Speaker, may I ask a supplementary question. In the absence of the Minister of the Environment, perhaps I can direct my supplementary to the acting minister. In view of the fact that further floods are likely, is the federal government now prepared to establish a program of flood insurance for land owners in southwestern Ontario?

[Translation]

**Hon. Jean Chrétien (Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development):** Mr. Speaker, I will bring that question to the attention of the Minister of the Environment.

[English]

HIGH WATER LEVELS IN GREAT LAKES—SUGGESTED FEDERAL INITIATIVE IN FLOOD CONTROL PROGRAM

**Mr. Allan Lawrence (Northumberland-Durham):** Mr. Speaker, my supplementary question is for the Prime Minister. In view of the fact that not only in the Windsor area alone, not only in the Lake Erie area alone but right through the lower Great Lakes this year there is a tragedy forthcoming of gigantic proportions, would the Prime Minister please impress upon his ministers that they should not leave most of the responsibility to the provincial government and, as this is an international waterway and a navigable waterway, will the federal government show more initiative and leadership in the whole flood control program in the lower Great Lakes?

**Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister):** Mr. Speaker, on the problem of flood control and meeting natural disasters the government has a position. It has explained this position. The essence of it is that we do not like to intervene in provincial jurisdictions or in provincial territory or in areas off that territory except at the request of the province. In fact, in previous years at the flood season