

Oral Questions

[Translation]

ENERGY

GASIFICATION PROJECT—GOVERNMENT POSITION

Hon. Roch La Salle (Joliette): Madam Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources. Everyone knows about the interest shown both by Nova Scotia and Quebec toward the regasification project. Last Friday, the Minister of Regional Economic Expansion told some reporters before the Chamber of Commerce in Quebec that the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources had informed him that it would be completely ridiculous to choose Canso as a site for this project, which has obviously greatly encouraged Quebecers to try to get it for themselves. Can the minister now tell the House whether he has indeed examined this project and whether he considers it ridiculous, as indicated by his colleague, the Minister of Regional Economic Expansion in Quebec last Friday?

Hon. Marc Lalonde (Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources): Madam Speaker, not only is the hon. member misquoting the Minister of Regional Economic Expansion, but I believe he is even misquoting the newspaper article to which he has referred.

Mr. La Salle: I must repeat, Madam Speaker, that the Minister of Regional Economic Expansion told reporters in Quebec that the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources considered that it would be absolutely ridiculous to choose Canso as a site for this project. I would like to ask the minister whether he can now confirm that the statements of the Minister of Regional Economic Expansion were well founded, in contradiction to what the minister has been saying for some time in the House to the effect that this project was still under consideration. I believe that it is important for the population to understand the significance of the statement made by the Minister of Regional Economic Expansion.

Mr. Lalonde: Madam Speaker, it goes without saying that such a question should be put to the Minister of Regional Economic Expansion himself, to find out what he did or did not say. What I wish to stress is the fact that the hon. member does not even properly quote the newspaper article to which he is supposed to be referring.

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[English]

HEALTH CARE

UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO DENTAL FACULTY—LOSS OF FULL ACCREDITATION

Mr. Bruce Halliday (Oxford): Madam Speaker, my question is for the Minister of National Health and Welfare. The

faculty of dentistry at the University of Toronto, which is Canada's largest dental school, has recently lost its full accreditation to that of provisional accreditation. Since this is an indication of weakness in the teaching program and has a significant impact on the quality of dental care which is available to Canadians, is the minister aware of this problem and what is being done about it?

Hon. Monique Bégin (Minister of National Health and Welfare): I am aware of this problem in a relatively superficial way. It does not fall at all under the responsibility or the jurisdiction of the federal government. If the hon. member is interested, I can inquire and obtain more information, which I will forward to him.

Mr. Halliday: Madam Speaker, I assume that the minister is concerned about the over-all health care of Canadians. With that in mind, and the fact that she is committed to preventive health care, is it true that she has no dentist in her health services directorate? If that is so, does she have any plans to rectify this major deficiency in her staff?

Miss Bégin: Madam Speaker, this is one of those days when I wish I was a provincial health minister. I am the federal Minister of National Health and Welfare. Within these parameters I try to make sure we have the best medicare in the country and the best health services. The direct delivery of services does not fall under the jurisdiction of my department but is the full responsibility of the provinces.

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SOCIAL SECURITY

RUMOURS CONCERNING CUTS IN CANADA ASSISTANCE PLAN

Hon. Flora MacDonald (Kingston and the Islands): Madam Speaker, my question is supplemental to the one asked earlier today by the hon. member for Rosedale. It is for the Minister of National Health and Welfare. There are rumours—and this government seems to thrive on floating rumours and balloons of one kind or another—that the minister's next attack on the poor will be by way of taking an axe to the Canada Assistance Plan. That is to say she intends not only to place a limit on the provincial payments under the Canada Assistance Plan, but that she intends to reduce it considerably. Since she has already managed to upset senior citizens and the working poor, and it is now a question of welfare recipients, she has the opportunity today to stand in the House, as I would ask her to do, and put an end to this rumour that her next move will be to attack the Canada Assistance Plan and welfare recipients.

Hon. Monique Bégin (Minister of National Health and Welfare): Madam Speaker, the hon. member's description is like the wording in a cartoon, and I suppose I must stand up and answer although I am not sure I fit her description.

The purpose of the government's objective, which was expressed through the budget, my role and the role of the team in my department, and of the standing committee on which the