

Oral Questions

● (1450)

[English]

Mrs. Erola: Mr. Speaker, I should like to assure the Leader of the Opposition that any bill coming forward that would deal with the problem would need the concurrence and support of Hon. Members opposite. I urge them to work on that matter.

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ATOMIC ENERGY CONTROL BOARD**KEY LAKE URANIUM MINE—FAILURE TO FILE CONTINGENCY SPILL PLANS**

Mr. Jim Fulton (Skeena): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources regarding the Key Lake mining operation. It is a very simple question. As the Minister knows, the Province of Saskatchewan and the operators of the Key Lake mine were required by the law of this Parliament to file contingency spill plans before being licensed by the Government. They did not file those contingency spill plans, but the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources gave them the licence anyway. Why did he do that?

Hon. Jean Chrétien (Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources): Mr. Speaker, I think I did not give permission myself; it is the board that renders the decision. I am not sure that the premise of the question of the Hon. Member is the right one, but I will check that aspect. I am not sure they were obligated to file it in the same terms as reported by the Hon. Member, but I will check and report on it.

Mr. Fulton: Mr. Speaker, on this side of the House we are sure that contingency spill plans were not filed. We are quite sure that the Minister is the one responsible for issuance of that licence and he did issue it. I think the people of this country have the right to know why.

ISSUANCE OF LICENCE TO OPERATE MINE

Mr. Jim Fulton (Skeena): Mr. Speaker, under what kind of pressure did the AECB and the Minister issue a licence to the Key Lake mine, knowing full well that it was illegal and that the mine has operated illegally? Why did he do that, and under pressure from whom?

I see that the Minister is now getting his information from the Prime Minister. Maybe the Prime Minister got a call from somewhere and perhaps he would like to answer the question. The people of this country would like to know why those thugs over there are giving companies in this country illegal licences to operate.

Hon. Jean Chrétien (Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of the Environment mentioned earlier that the NDP are desperate, looking for something to rescue them. I said I would check. The Hon. Member said there was some requirements of the Government

that were not met. I am not informed of any such obligation that had to be met.

Mr. Fulton: I know you are not informed.

Mr. Chrétien: I will check that. If the law has been broken, we will make sure that the law is respected.

Mr. Fulton: You are a little late.

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CANADA ELECTIONS ACT**CONCERN ABOUT EFFECT ON CHARTER OF RIGHTS AND FREEDOMS**

Hon. Erik Nielsen (Yukon): Mr. Speaker, I should like to ask the Prime Minister if he is giving consideration to the re-examination of the provisions of Bill C-169, as a matter of public policy, since mounting concerns appear to be expressed with respect to the provisions of Clause 72 and its effect on the Charter of Rights and freedom of speech.

An Hon. Member: Is it cut and run, Erik?

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, if the Hon. Member is referring to the amendment to the election expenses legislation, the answer is that that legislation, which originated with this Government in the early 70s, was written for a specific purpose, which was to destroy the inequality which arose from the power of money. We think it was a very progressive piece of legislation, putting every citizen and every candidate in this country on an equal footing in so far as election expenses are concerned.

I am sure the Hon. Member is asking a rhetorical question because his Party certainly supports my answer, since it supported the amendment brought in last Fall. It is an amendment to ensure that the Citizens' Coalition, or any other group with a lot of money, do not controvert the spirit of that law. I am very grateful to the Hon. Member for Yukon for giving me the occasion to explain that to the country. I know my explanation has his support and that of the NDP.

RECOMMENDATION MADE BY CHIEF ELECTORAL OFFICER

Hon. Erik Nielsen (Yukon): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate that all Parties in the House of Commons supported that legislation. Since that time, of course, the Chief Electoral Officer, as is required by statute, has filed his statutory report to this House for 1983. In it he stated:

I believe this proposed amendment will ensure a level of equality amongst all participants in federal elections. It was carefully developed so as not to conflict with the intent of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms with respect to freedom of expression as this specifically relates to the election process.

The following are the important words in the report:

This notwithstanding, Parliament may find it desirable, in the light of the Charter, to be more explicit and specifically exempt media editorials from the proposed amendment.