

Oral Questions

and this is done by many other private stations throughout Canada, including the Western provinces mentioned by the Hon. Member—offered air time to Members of Parliament so they could broadcast Christmas and New Year's messages and thus reach their constituents in remote areas, as the Hon. Member may have understood. In any case, this year again, the stations in question decided to invite Members of Parliament to broadcast their messages for the holiday season. The President of the CBC discussed the matter with me this morning, and after this review of the situation, it seems that the President of the CBC will either have to offer the same services to all Members of this House or otherwise give orders to drop a tradition that started in one area of the Province of Quebec.

[English]

REQUEST THAT LIBERAL PARTY PAY FOR PROGRAMS

Hon. Edward Broadbent (Oshawa): Madam Speaker, I am sure that the President of the CBC reconsidered the policy as soon as he read newspaper reports and realized that what was going on was revealed to the public. That is what happened. But considering that the decision the Minister talked about is no longer a private decision, considering that other Liberal Members of Parliament—I repeat, other Liberal Members—have used a number of hours of production time, or requested production time already from the CBC, I would like to ask the Minister, in addition to correcting bad judgments in the past, since production of some programs for Liberal Members has already been done, will the Liberal Party, just for once, show a little integrity and pay back the CBC the money that went for those programs.

● (1430)

[Translation]

Hon. Francis Fox (Minister of Communications): Madam Speaker, I am sure that the CBC would be delighted to offer the same services to Members of the New Democratic Party, elected in the Province of Quebec. Although it is unfortunate for the Hon. Leader of the New Democratic Party, the people of Quebec are far too intelligent to elect his members. I may add that the service is not only offered to local Liberal members but also, and it is the same service to which the Leader of the New Democratic Party is objecting, to bishops, parish priests and other locally known people. If I understand correctly, he objects to the fact that in this particular area of the Province of Quebec, mayors, bishops and other moral, religious and civil authorities are able to offer their best wishes to their fellow citizens.

[English]

Mr. Andre: You would not know right from wrong if it hit you over the head.

Mr. Clark: Go forge an order.

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RAILWAYS

SCHEDULED ABANDONMENT OF LINE FROM FERRLOW JUNCTION TO DINOSAUR, ALTA.

Mr. Arnold Malone (Crowfoot): Madam Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Transport.

Madam Speaker: Order. The Hon. Member for Crowfoot.

Mr. Malone: Madam Speaker, I am sorry you have had so much difficulty with those noisy Liberals.

The Minister of Transport will know that the railway line from Ferrlow Junction to Dinosaur, a distance of 103 miles, has been scheduled for abandonment on August 31, 1983. Is the Minister aware that, in the middle of that 103 miles of line, Gulf Oil has made a large oil strike which some claim is the equivalent of the Pembina Field, and other reports are that it is probably one of the largest oil strikes in western Canada? Would the Minister have his office alerted to that because it may be necessary for the Minister involve himself personally in the saving of that railway line for the moving of equipment to the oil field?

Hon. Jean-Luc Pepin (Minister of Transport): Madam Speaker, I will get myself further informed on that subject. But it is a traditional event that, when a branch line is about to be abandoned, suddenly there are boundless resources found around it which would seem to justify not abandoning the line. It is a customary pattern in Canadian economic life.

Mr. Malone: Madam Speaker, I am quite aware of the alternative courses of action which are available for defending that railway line, and those actions are already underway. I want the Minister to be ready himself.

REQUEST THAT MINISTER HOLD DISCUSSIONS WITH GULF OIL

Mr. Arnold Malone (Crowfoot): Madam Speaker, with that in mind I am wondering if the Minister would investigate this matter and, having done so, whether he would consider calling to an in-camera discussion representatives of Gulf Oil with respect to the size of that field and its development potential, with a view to having the Commission recommend to the Minister whether or not that rail line ought to be preserved?

Hon. Jean-Luc Pepin (Minister of Transport): Madam Speaker, I will make sure that this particular circumstance was taken into consideration by the Canadian Transport Commission when the decision was made. There is an appeal procedure to the Minister, and I will do everything I can to make absolutely sure that fairness and justice are carried out in this particular matter.