

Oral Questions

ENERGY

PROPOSED FEDERAL REGULATION OF INTERPROVINCIAL
TRANSMISSION OF ELECTRICITY—CONSULTATION WITH
PROVINCES

Miss Flora MacDonald (Kingston and the Islands): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources. It relates to his statement made last Sunday at Chatham, Massachusetts in which he said that it might be necessary for the Canadian government to regulate interprovincial transmission of electricity in much the same way as it now does oil and gas. Given the reaction this statement has occasioned will the minister furnish the House with the specifics of this new government proposal and will he say what consultation there was with the provinces prior to this statement?

Hon. Alastair Gillespie (Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources): Mr. Speaker, I was not making any particular proposal. I was making an observation which I think is a very important observation. My concern—and I am sure it is the concern of many of the hon. member's colleagues—is that power policy, particularly electrical generation and transmission within the maritimes and Atlantic Canada generally, has been held back by balkanization and there is a very good chance that if very narrow provincial views are the dominant views we will not find any solution for Atlantic Canada on a bigger, more efficient scale. I made the observation that I thought the federal government has the constitutional power to move in if necessary in the transmission of electric power in the same way—the principle is very much the same—as it has in respect of oil and natural gas transmission.

● (1440)

Miss MacDonald: My supplementary question is to ask the minister again what consultation he had with the provinces prior to his statement, and since his proposal has been interpreted by several provinces as an attempt to intrude on the natural resources field, what clarification did he subsequently give to the provinces to relieve their concerns as to the constitutionality of his proposal?

Mr. Gillespie: Mr. Speaker, my predecessor tells me that the same point of view that I expressed at that time was raised with the provincial premiers, or some of them, as long as a year ago. I had some discussions prior to this meeting with some of the premiers—I was not able to reach them all. You may recall that one of the provincial premiers, as a matter of fact, was in Europe at that time. But I did have occasion to meet with each of the premiers or their ministers before we sat down at the public session, and we discussed these questions specifically.

Miss MacDonald: After you made the statement.

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ROYAL CANADIAN MOUNTED POLICE

REQUEST FOR REPORT ON ALLEGED BREAK-IN OF QUEBEC
NEWSPAPER OFFICE BY MEMBERS OF THE FORCE

Mr. Elmer M. MacKay (Central Nova): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Solicitor General. In addition to

[Mr. Mackasey.]

co-operating with his provincial counterpart and as the minister responsible for the RCMP, will he indicate whether or not he is prepared to give this House a comprehensive report into the circumstances involved in the break and entry by the force and by other police into the premises of L'Agence de Presse Libre du Quebec, and fulfill the commitment he made in the House to give as much information as possible on this matter?

Hon. Warren Allmand (Solicitor General): As hon. members know, there is an allegation that a criminal offence was committed in the break in of the L'Agence de Presse Libre du Quebec. The Solicitor General of Quebec, in his capacity as chief law enforcement officer in Quebec, is investigating that matter and has asked for our full co-operation. I have spoken to the commissioner of the RCMP and he said he would make available to the Solicitor General of Quebec all information relevant to that particular incident, and the Solicitor General of Quebec will take action in due course. Whether he lays charges or not will be for him to decide as the person in charge of administering the Criminal Code in the province.

Mr. MacKay: I would hope that, regardless of what happened in Quebec, the minister, as the minister responsible, would indicate what the circumstances were. Whose specific responsibility was it to make certain that proper legal authority existed for the RCMP to enter the premises of L'Agence de Presse Libre du Quebec, the purpose of which such entry was obtained, and assure the House that, as one former RCMP officer described such operations, it was not "a wholesale ransacking and appropriation of papers", or a fishing expedition?

Mr. Allmand: At this time I only have the side of the story presented by the RCMP. I do not have the reports of the Quebec provincial police or the Montreal city police. After the Solicitor General of Quebec makes the decision to act or not to act in this case, of course, we may have more to say and may take action ourselves. It would appear from the information I have that this was a joint operation with the three forces involved, and it is unclear at this stage who had complete authority for the operation. There is some difference of opinion at present among the forces as to who had the final say on this, and that is part of the investigation that is going on.

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AIR TRANSPORT

AIR PASSENGER SERVICE FOR ATLANTIC PROVINCES—
POSSIBILITY OF EARLY ACTION

Mr. Maurice Harquail (Restigouche): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Transport. It has to do with the air passenger service in Atlantic Canada. In view of the desperate need for this service, and in view of the support by the Council of Maritime Premiers recently of the bid of Eastern Provincial Airways Limited to provide this service, could the minister indicate to the House what is the disposition of his department to ensure the quickest possible implementation of this service in Atlantic Canada?