

Oral Questions

irregularities which caused problems for Canadians and Quebecers?

Hon. Jean Chrétien (Minister of Justice and Minister of State for Social Development): Madam Speaker, when we have a Canadian charter of rights applicable to all Canadians, the federal government as well as the provincial governments will have to ensure that all statutes are in keeping with this charter. The Department of Justice knows that we shall have to amend several statutes in this Parliament in order to delete from them some discriminatory provisions. And if there are unfortunately 100 Quebec statutes which contain discriminatory provisions, I hope that the provincial government will be more than willing to act rapidly to remove from them every discriminatory aspect.

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[English]

CORPORATE AFFAIRS**PRICING PRACTICES OF OIL COMPANIES—REASONS FOR NOT INSTITUTING PROSECUTIONS**

Hon. Ray Hnatyshyn (Saskatoon West): Madam Speaker, I should like to turn to the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs with respect to the report of the director on price fixing. It seems to me that there is a principle of natural justice involved here. The government cannot try to avoid its responsibility by simply saying it accepts the recommendations of the director. There is a question here of an almost Star Chamberish attitude on the part of the government in that it declares that the people are guilty and then allows them two years in which to prove they are innocent. Why does the government not now proceed with the prosecution and get this matter before the courts? The courts are open, the courts are independent, so why can we not now have an adjudication within the proper judicial process? Why does the government not initiate such action at this time?

Hon. André Ouellet (Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs and Postmaster General): Madam Speaker, I do not know if the hon. member was present a few minutes ago.

Mr. Stevens: Answer the question.

Mr. Ouellet: The type of questions that were asked by the hon. member for Hamilton-Wentworth and the hon. member for Northumberland-Durham earlier implied that the facts gathered by the director of combines had to be taken as a reality, have to be accepted—

Mr. Hnatyshyn: That is what you said.

Mr. Ouellet:—and be taken as if the case were completed. The government did not do that. The government allowed the director to go before the Restrictive Trade Practices Commission to present his evidence and allowed the companies to present their own point of view and have the Restrictive Trade Practices Commission render decisions on the evidence pre-

ented before the tribunal. I submit that we have not jumped the gun but that it is the colleagues of the hon. member who have jumped to conclusions rather quickly.

Mr. Hnatyshyn: Madam Speaker, the minister cannot attempt to shift the responsibility from himself to the opposition. That will not work; it will not wash. The minister knows that the director must make a report in his annual report on whether there was sufficient evidence to warrant prosecution. That report will be handed down today, but the minister did not have the courage to bring the matter before the House by a statement on motions. He did it outside the House.

In view of the fact that the report that will be brought down today—which mysteriously got into the hands of the press—indicates that the director finds details of collusion amongst the oil companies to fix prices, and makes specific recommendations on how the practice can be halted—that is in the report and the minister will have read it—what is the purpose of now referring the matter to the Restrictive Trade Practices Commission? What will be gained and what will be the conclusion if the Restrictive Trade Practices Commission does not have the ability to adjudicate on this issue?

Mr. Ouellet: Madam Speaker, I think the hon. member is prejudging the case before it is presented.

An hon. Member: No.

An hon. Member: You are.

Mr. Ouellet: I submit to hon. members that they should first of all read the report and access for themselves the evidence gathered and then, maybe in the days to come, put questions on a document that they will have received and on which everyone will be in a position to speak, and not speculate in advance as the hon. member is doing.

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MARINE TRANSPORT**WITHDRAWAL OF DART CONTAINERLINE SERVICE FROM HALIFAX—DATE OF ANNOUNCEMENT**

Mr. Howard Crosby (Halifax West): Madam Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Transport respecting the withdrawal of the Dart Containerline Service from the port of Halifax. The minister now knows the havoc created by this action. He knows that Nova Scotians are blaming the CNR and himself for the action and he knows he is being accused of aiding the Cast shipping group in favour of the port of Montreal to the detriment of the port of Halifax.

When did the minister tell the National Harbours Board, when did he tell the port of Halifax and when did he tell his colleague from the city of Halifax, the Minister of Labour, about the impending action? Why did he not inform the public so that it would know what was transpiring and could take action against it?