

Oral Questions

concerns? Why did the Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce send a telegram but did not send a representative from the government? Surely a Toronto member of Parliament or the member for the area might have shown some concern for the workers' plight.

[Translation]

Hon. Charles Lapointe (Minister of State, Small Businesses): Madam Speaker, concerning this meeting of the McDonnell Douglas workers during the Christmas recess of Parliament, the hon. member knows that the Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce was not able to attend because of his accident. As for other government representatives, I cannot reply to this question since I was not myself invited to attend.

[English]

Mr. McDermid: Madam Speaker, that is sweet comfort for those 700 workers who have been laid off.

My supplementary is again for the parliamentary secretary. Who has the final say in awarding contracts in Canada for the construction of the F-18A? Does the Canadian government have any input? If so, will the government guarantee that McDonnell Douglas Canada Ltd., which has the trained work force, the facilities and the know-how, will obtain the work which was promised by the company before it was awarded the contract?

[Translation]

Mr. Lapointe (Charlevoix): Madam Speaker, obviously, the government has a role to play as concerns the economic fall-out from the F-18 program, since the Canadian government is a contracting party to the purchase of the F-18 from McDonnell Douglas. The decisions concerning the awarding of contracts for the structural parts have not yet been made. Discussions are now going on between McDonnell Douglas and representatives of the Department of Industry, Trade and Commerce and other departments involved.

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[English]

OFFSHORE RESOURCES**OIL AND GAS DRILLING PROSPECTS FOR 1981**

Mr. Howard Crosby (Halifax West): Madam Speaker, I have a question for the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources concerning offshore resource exploration. Yesterday the minister assured the House that there are as many oil drilling rigs active in Canada this very month as there were in January one year ago, notwithstanding reports that many are leaving Canada. I would like the minister's assurance that oil and gas drilling activity off the Atlantic coast will be maintained in 1981. Can the minister comment on a report that Mobil Oil has delayed plans to move a semi-submersible rig from the North Sea to the Sable Island area off Nova Scotia because of the government's energy policies?

Hon. Marc Lalonde (Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources): Madam Speaker, I would like to repeat the statement made yesterday emanating from *Oilweek* magazine, that as of January 6 there were exactly the same number of rigs operating in Canada as there were last year and slightly more were operating than in 1979. I hope not only that the activity will be maintained on the east coast, but that it will be increased this year.

As far as the specific problem raised by the hon. member is concerned, I had the opportunity of discussing this issue with the president of Mobil Oil I believe a few weeks ago, in December. He indicated to me that the problem had nothing to do with the National Energy Program, but that there were some problems in terms of the mobility and adjustments of their rigs involved in offshore activities around the world. He indicated there would be a slight delay but he expected the rig in question to be in action some time in the spring.

Mr. Crosby: Madam Speaker, I appreciate the minister's comments but they are in conflict with the report aired on CTV in Halifax. However, I will ask the minister again with respect to Mobil Oil's operations offshore. The company has said, and there have been published reports, that it is concerned with the dispute between the provinces and the federal government over ownership of resources. What is the minister doing to resolve this dispute? In particular, has the minister any intention of referring this matter to the Supreme Court of Canada as indicated in "The National Energy Program", where it is stated that the government is anxious to have this dispute referred to the courts or to the Supreme Court of Canada?

Mr. Lalonde: Madam Speaker, I am very happy to know that the hon. member is supporting such a possible reference to the Supreme Court of Canada. The government has offered the opportunity to agree on the terms of reference to governments of the maritime provinces and the government of Newfoundland. Unfortunately, the government of Newfoundland has not yet responded positively to any of our approaches in this respect.

As far as the first part of the hon. member's question is concerned, I would rather believe the president of Mobil Oil than a CTV report.

An hon. Member: That is a change of heart.

Mr. Lalonde: I am telling him what the president of Mobil Oil told me during the course of our conversations some time in November or December.

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REGIONAL ECONOMIC EXPANSION**NATIONAL SEA PRODUCTS PLANT, LOCKPORT, N.S.—INQUIRY RESPECTING AVAILABILITY OF GRANT**

Mr. Lloyd R. Crouse (South Shore): Madam Speaker, I have a question for the Minister of Regional Economic Expans-