

Oral Questions

● (1440)

An Hon. Member: You cannot have it both ways, John.

Mr. Riis: Have you seen it, Brian?

Mr. Mulroney: As soon as the deal was initialled, the next day I brought it forward and gave it to the House of Commons, as I ought to have done. We have had debates on it. Question Period is devoted to it. A parliamentary committee is now being set up. Surely nothing could be more democratic than to ask Members of the House of Commons to consult with ordinary Canadians on a matter of such importance.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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AUDITOR GENERAL'S REPORT**GRANT MADE TO WEST EDMONTON MALL PROJECT**

Mr. Brian Tobin (Humber—Port au Port—St. Barbe): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Deputy Prime Minister. It concerns the Deputy Prime Minister's conduct as Acting Minister of DRIE during July, 1986. The Auditor General's Report tabled today in the House tells us that the owners of the West Edmonton Mall were given a non-repayable \$5 million DRIE grant during the Deputy Prime Minister's tenure as Acting Minister of DRIE.

The payment was made on the Deputy Prime Minister's recommendation to Cabinet despite the fact that the West Edmonton Mall was ineligible for DRIE assistance and despite the fact that the mall's application for assistance was turned down by the previous Liberal Government, the current administration, and by the Government of Alberta.

In light of these facts contained in the Auditor General's Report tabled at two o'clock today in this House, I ask the Deputy Prime Minister what possible explanation can he have for this \$5 million gift to the West Edmonton Mall?

Hon. Robert de Cotret (Minister of Regional Industrial Expansion and Minister of State for Science and Technology): Mr. Speaker, the grant in question of \$5 million was in fact a contribution to the West Edmonton Mall project. It was made for reasons of commercial viability to ensure the realization of that project. It was approved by Cabinet to fund a project that would be of great benefit to that particular region.

MINISTER'S EXPLANATION

Mr. Brian Tobin (Humber—Port au Port—St. Barbe): Mr. Speaker, my supplementary question is directed to the Deputy Prime Minister. The Deputy Prime Minister knows that the application was rejected by the previous Government, this Government, the Government of Alberta, and senior officials of DRIE. He knows that the mall project was started and

completed before the funds were ever given to the owners of the West Edmonton Mall, so they did not contribute to the financial viability of the mall. The payment was received by the mall's owners long after the mall was completed and was operating.

I ask the Deputy Prime Minister again, in light of the facts contained in the Auditor General's Report, in light of the facts laid before all Member of this House—not my allegations, the Auditor General's Report—what possible explanation does he have for the taxpayers of Canada for giving a \$5 million gift to the owners of the West Edmonton Mall? What kind of scam was the Deputy Prime Minister involved in in July of 1986?

Hon. Don Mazankowski (Deputy Prime Minister, President of the Privy Council and President of the Treasury Board): Mr. Speaker, I am not surprised that the previous Government would reject any support for western Canada. That has been a tradition.

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Tobin: Answer the question.

Mr. Mazankowski: I will answer the question because the Hon. Member should get his facts straight. It was not for the West Edmonton Mall. It was for Fantasyland, which is a very major and very important tourist attraction to Edmonton, to Alberta, to western Canada, indeed to all of Canada, and it deserves support.

Mr. Turner (Vancouver Quadra): Oh, boy!

Mr. Caccia: Your Party belongs to Fantasyland.

Mr. Mazankowski: If he wants to talk about the Auditor General's Report, this is what the Auditor General had to say, and I quote: "In summary—".

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Mazankowski: Mr. Speaker—

Mr. Speaker: The question that has been asked of the Deputy Prime Minister is a serious one and it carries tones of an allegation. I think, in fairness, the Deputy Prime Minister should have courtesy from all Hon. Members in order to respond.

Mr. Mazankowski: Mr. Speaker, what the Hon. Member deliberately overlooks is some of the more positive things that are said in the Auditor General's Report and I quote Paragraph 4.212. This is what the Auditor General had to say about the performance of this Government—

Mr. Turner (Vancouver Quadra): Oh come on!

Mr. Mazankowski: