

Oral Questions

Madam Speaker: Order, please. If the hon. member does not go directly to his question, I will have to recognize another questioner.

Mr. McGrath: Madam Speaker, I merely want to ask the Right Hon. Prime Minister why does he have this double standard. Why does he not do on this resolution what he did on Bill C-60, namely, withdraw the resolution from Parliament and refer it to the Supreme Court of Canada? That is simply what he has to do.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Trudeau: Madam Speaker, the opposition seems to have only one fallback position, and it is Bill C-60. I remind the hon. member that Bill C-60 was referred to the Supreme Court, not to know whether the federal government was acting against some constitution or convention; the case was where we acting within the authority of Section 91(1) of the British North America Act.

An hon. Member: That is the Constitution.

Mr. McGrath: It is the same process.

Mr. Trudeau: We have a section of our present Constitution—

Mr. McGrath: You have gone outside Section 91 on this.

● (1450)

Mr. Trudeau: Does the hon. member want an answer?

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Trudeau: We were asking the courts whether, within our present Constitution, Section 91(1), the federal government could do certain things. Now there is no section of the Constitution, as hon. members know, and no written document, which says how the Constitution of Canada can be amended. It is a different situation from that in respect of Bill C-60. The hon. member keeps repeating that what we are doing is illegal. I repeat to him: why did he not conclude it was legal when Manitoba rendered in our favour, and what will he do if Quebec renders in our favour? Will it suddenly become legal, or will it still remain illegal because—

An hon. Member: Send it to the Supreme Court.

Mr. Trudeau: That is precisely the offer we are putting before this House.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Trudeau: The hon. member says we should withdraw and send it to the court. I ask hon. members whether they are interested in determining the legality of this action, or in delay? If they want more delay, then they are certainly taking the right course. If they want a decision on legality, then the course I am suggesting is the only one for sure.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

PORTS**DEVELOPMENT OF ROBERTS BANK, B.C., SUPERPORT—
ENVIRONMENTAL OBJECTIONS**

Mr. Thomas Siddon (Richmond-South Delta): Madam Speaker, while the Prime Minister thinks a little more deeply about the pickle he is in, I should like to direct a question to the Minister of the Environment.

In March, 1979, the Environmental Assessment and Review Panel studying the proposed expansion of the Roberts Bank superport in Delta, British Columbia, reported to the cabinet and recommended against a major expansion of the Roberts Bank superport being proposed by the National Harbours Board, an expansion which would increase the area of that port by some five times. Cabinet opposition was confirmed by the fact that the Minister for the Environment at that time supported the recommendations of the Environmental Assessment and Review Panel for a much smaller scale of development at Roberts Bank.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. First of all the question is rather long and, secondly, may we have a bit of silence in the House?

Mr. Siddon: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Has the minister chosen to bypass the findings of the EARP in 1979, has he given his formal consent, together with the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, for the project of expansion at Roberts Bank on a scale approaching that which was originally envisaged and which includes a massive turning basin and at least three additional pads, therefore disregarding the recommendations of EARP?

Hon. John Roberts (Minister of State for Science and Technology and Minister of the Environment): Madam Speaker, the hon. member's question, as you say, was rather long and rather complicated. I can say to him that we do not have environmental objections to the project proceeding as planned. It has been a little bit of time since I have reviewed this issue and, if the hon. member would like, I would be happy to respond to him at greater length in a letter.

ANNOUNCEMENT OF DREDGING CONTRACT

Mr. Thomas Siddon (Richmond-South Delta): Madam Speaker, my question is rather timely and I believe the Minister of Transport will confirm this. Will he confirm that his department will announce Treasury Board approval of a contract for dredging at Roberts Bank to develop this much larger project, a contract in the amount of some \$35 million to a foreign-owned dredging company, to use Dutch dredging equipment, and that the contract will be announced within the next three or four days, a contract giving this foreign dredging consortium special concessions regarding duty exemptions? If that is so, so much for the environmental review process. Will the Minister of Transport confirm that such a decision will be announced shortly?