

PETROLEUM INDUSTRY

ACQUISITION OF GULF CANADA—TAX CONCESSIONS— CABINET'S ROLE

Hon. Jean Chrétien (Saint-Maurice): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Right Hon. Prime Minister. Considering the answer he gave earlier to the New Democratic Party House Leader, could he give the House the assurance that at no time was the administrative decision concerning Olympia and York and Gulf Canada discussed in Cabinet, neither before nor after it became effective?

Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, perhaps the Hon. Member could explain what decisions he is talking about.

Mr. Chrétien: The decision he made to allow Olympia and York a tax exemption worth between \$500 million and one billion dollars. Was the administrative decision made by departmental officials discussed in Cabinet, yes or no, before or after the officials made their decision?

[English]

Hon. Elmer M. MacKay (Minister of National Revenue): Mr. Speaker, at the risk of being repetitive, I have to tell my hon. friend opposite, who knows these things very well, that this particular ruling was discussed in the proper way by the officials of National Revenue. The Hon. Member also knows, as I have mentioned to the House before, that, contrary to some opinions that have been expressed, the taxpayers in question could have gone ahead with this particular transaction without any ruling at all. The fact that they asked for comfort, for a ruling, does not necessarily mean that this transaction was solely dependent on such a ruling.

[Translation]

TIMING OF CABINET'S DISCUSSION OF DECISION

Hon. Jean Chrétien (Saint-Maurice): Mr. Speaker, I shall make my question even more specific, either for the Minister or the Prime Minister.

I would like to know whether the administrative decision by officials of the Department of National Revenue was discussed in Cabinet or in a Cabinet committee, before or after it was made by these officials. That is what we want to know, because if the decision made by these officials was discussed by Cabinet or a Cabinet committee, it is then no longer an administrative decision but a political decision.

Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, the Hon. Member knows perfectly well that I cannot do that nor would he want me to break the confidentiality of what is discussed in Cabinet. However, I think I have already answered the main question, which is that the decision was made by National Revenue officials on the basis of objective criteria that apply to all taxpayers, corporate or otherwise.

[English]

Oral Questions

PUBLIC SERVICE

RESIGNATION OF WOMAN MANAGER

Ms. Lynn McDonald (Broadview-Greenwood): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Prime Minister who will know that Isobel Goligher was the first woman to achieve a senior managerial position with the federal Government in the Department of Supply and Services in London, Ontario, and that within a year of her obtaining this promotion she resigned under duress. Would the Prime Minister establish an independent inquiry to look into the circumstances surrounding her resignation and to ensure that justice be done in the case of Isobel Goligher?

Hon. Flora MacDonald (Minister of Employment and Immigration): Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the Minister responsible for the status of women, I will take that question as notice and see that it is brought to his attention.

REQUEST FOR INDEPENDENT INQUIRY

Ms. Lynn McDonald (Broadview-Greenwood): Mr. Speaker, I had a letter delivered to the Prime Minister today advising him of this matter. The request has been longstanding in his office. The only means of redress are those at his level.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. Is there a question?

Ms. McDonald: Will the Prime Minister agree to establish an independent inquiry since there are no further means of redress? Will he keep the word that he gave us when he agreed, as Leader of the Opposition, that an independent inquiry was the only means of redress for a person in this situation?

Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, I will certainly take a look quickly at the suggestion raised by my hon. friend. One of the main objectives of the Government on which we have acted effectively—not perfectly but effectively and well—has been to increase the number of women in senior responsible positions in the Public Service of Canada. We have done so dramatically, and we want to ensure that that process continues at all times and is not inhibited by the kind of alleged injustice raised by the Hon. Member. If that is the case, I will get on to it right away, and I thank the Hon. Member for raising this matter.

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ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS

UNLEADED GASOLINE TAX

Hon. Chas. L. Caccia (Davenport): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of the Environment who undoubtedly knows that his colleague, the Minister of Finance, is proposing a tax measure to impose a greater tax on unleaded