

Oral Questions

procedure he intends to take to break the deadlock so that the work in the ship yards will not stop completely?

Hon. Jean Chrétien (President of the Treasury Board): Mr. Speaker, workers in state-owned shipyards in eastern and western Canada are now in a position to strike. It is not a general strike but a rotating strike, and I hope we will be able to meet at the bargaining table, to try and find a common ground for negotiations.

What they are doing now is legal. They exercise the right they were given by Parliament. For our part, we try to offer them the best possible compensation, but without creating at the same time a problem for the other sectors of the Public Service.

Mr. Munro (Esquimalt-Saanich): Mr. Speaker, I have a supplementary for the minister. What measures is he taking to protect those who want or must cross an eventual picket line?

Mr. Chrétien: Mr. Speaker, I think it is a legal strike at this time. Not all workers are on strike. The union itself authorizes a great number of workers to report for work, so I do not see why I should intervene when the discretion of the union prevails in those circumstances.

* * *

[English]

ENERGY

OIL—SUGGESTED RECONSIDERATION OF COMPENSATION PAYMENTS IN VIEW OF PRICING POLICY OF EXXON—GOVERNMENT ACTION

Mr. Cyril Symes (Sault Ste. Marie): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources. In view of the fact that OPEC will most likely raise the price of crude oil by 35 per cent in October, thereby necessitating a rise in oil compensation payments to the oil companies in eastern Canada, and in view of recent testimony in the court case between Imperial Oil and Nova Scotia Power Corporation that Exxon and Imperial have manipulated oil prices to their own advantage, what measures is the government taking to reassess compensation payments made in the past and which will be made when the new round of price increases comes into effect?

Hon. Donald S. Macdonald (Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources): As a result of the testimony in that case I have asked the officials of the Energy Supplies Allocation Board to make a fresh assessment of the delivered cost of oil in eastern Canada, particularly having in mind the actions of Imperial and its affiliated companies in this respect. I hope we will not be faced with a situation where legal methods of that kind are employed to raise the price, but we will be alert to this possibility, as indeed is the Department of National Revenue.

Mr. Symes: In view of the fact that the government faces a deficit in this year of \$500 million by maintaining present compensation payments, and that Exxon, the parent company of Imperial, has the final say in the pricing regime for oil, but is beyond Canadian jurisdiction,

[Mr. Munro (Esquimalt-Saanich).]

tion, will the government consider lowering the compensation payments to Imperial Oil in view of the highly suspect pricing policies of its parent company?

Mr. Macdonald (Rosedale): Mr. Speaker, I can say that the compensation program is now under assessment with regard to some possible procedural changes. I do not think we would single out a specific company.

* * *

ADMINISTRATION OF JUSTICE

ALLEGATION SUCCESSFUL BIDDER ON DREDGING CONTRACT KNEW ESTIMATE OF DEPARTMENT—METHOD OF OBTAINING INFORMATION

Hon. Robert L. Stanfield (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Minister of Justice, and I welcome him back from Saskatchewan.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hees: Our fellows wanted you to stay out there, Otto. You are a great help to the Tories out there.

Mr. Stanfield: Since a counterclaim filed on behalf of the Minister of Justice in a law suit involving dredging on the Orleans Traverse alleges that the dredging companies knew what the estimate of the Ministry of Transport was as to what the job should be done for, could the Minister of Justice indicate to the House whether he knows how the dredging companies obtained the information as to what the estimate made by the Ministry of Transport was, and whether he is prepared to indicate that to the House?

Hon. Otto E. Lang (Minister of Justice): Mr. Speaker, first I would like to thank the Leader of the Opposition for his welcome back to the House. He can welcome me back from Saskatchewan every other day because I am out there every other day and back here every other day checking the state of affairs.

Mr. Hees: You don't stay out long enough.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Lang: I think I would want to follow the ordinary course with regard to a matter which is going before the courts, and that is to have the evidence presented and the arguments made there, rather than to undertake an argument in this House which could be prejudicial to the matter coming before the courts, and which would be against our traditions.

● (1500)

Mr. Hnatyshyn: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. It comes about because of a motion moved by the President of the Privy Council, the government House leader, on June 3, 1975. At that time he moved that the Standing Committee on Indian Affairs and Northern Development travel from place to place in Quebec and Ontario on two separate occasions in June or during the summer adjournment to study the economic development on reserves and to inspect historical sites and parks. I should like to know whether the government House leader would be receptive