

Oral Questions

I also ask the minister whether he is prepared to intervene personally and instruct his officials to comply with the spirit and the articles contained in that memorandum of understanding which was negotiated and agreed to by both parties in good faith?

● (1440)

Hon. Jean-Luc Pepin (Minister of Transport): Madam Speaker, I am surprised to a certain extent that the hon. member for Vegreville identified me as the cause of this difficulty, because he is on record as having said in the House of Commons that what I did at Prince Rupert was exactly what he would have done. Be that as it may, it was understood from the beginning that the consortium would build the elevator. So, what is happening now is a discussion between the National Harbours Board and the grain consortium as to the definition of site preparation. Of course, the consortium is interested in giving it a wider definition, because there will be a sharing by the federal government of the underground preparation of the elevator.

To the question itself, of course the National Harbours Board will meet urgently with the consortium and discuss the issue. I will await the results before deciding what I will do.

Mr. Mazankowski: Madam Speaker, the difference between our government and this government is that we were prepared to honour the commitments which were signed and agreed to; there is no question about that.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Mazankowski: Further, there can be no question as to the obligation of the government in respect to fulfilling the commitment to share in the cost of site preparation, including the placement of caissons. That has been further concurred in, in the exchange of letters between the Department of Transport and the National Harbours Board.

The minister said that there are ongoing discussions. I am informed that a letter was directed by the consortium to the National Harbours Board indicating, in very blunt terms, that it will refuse to negotiate any further tenders until this matter is clarified. In order to break the log jam, will the minister personally intervene? If the government continues to be intransigent, as it is on this particular point, the entire project could be in jeopardy.

Mr. Pepin: Madam Speaker, my accessibility is well known by everybody.

Mr. Mazankowski: Do something.

Mr. Pepin: This agreement was signed last November. Since then the consortium manifested no disagreement with the terms of the agreement whatsoever.

Mr. Mazankowski: That is wrong, and you know it.

Mr. Pepin: At the very last minute the consortium came up with a different interpretation of the meaning of "site prepara-

tion". The National Harbours Board is there to attend to those matters, and I will attend to it if a resolution of the conflict does not take place.

* * *

NATIONAL SECURITY

TASCHEREAU COMMISSION PAPERS REVIEW

Mr. Tom Cossitt (Leeds-Grenville): Madam Speaker, my question is for the Solicitor General. In reply to one of my Order Paper questions on March 11, 1981, the government said that it was continuing the investigation ordered by the solicitor general of the Progressive Conservative government into why the Taschereau national security papers were being or had been locked up again by this government for a further ten years. Also it said that it was anticipated that this review would be completed by May 1 of this year, in other words, in a month or so.

Is the Solicitor General now prepared to confirm to the House that Ralph Branscombe has been appointed to make the review as to whether the papers should be released? Who appointed him, along with terms of reference? Will the report be tabled in Parliament or made public on or about May 1?

Hon. Bob Kaplan (Solicitor General): Madam Speaker, I can confirm those questions that were asked. I will not confirm that this is a study which is continuing one begun by the Conservative government. In fact, the then prime minister indicated in the House, during the Clark administration, that they were considering having a study. But, I have no evidence that they ever put a committee together or that they got the study off the ground.

This study was organized by the Clerk of the Privy Council; it is under way now. May 1 is the anticipated date on which we will have the report. I am not prepared to make a commitment that it will be the exact date on which the report will be made, but that is the target toward which officials are working.

QUERY RESPECTING EXISTENCE OF BOOK CONTAINING PERSONS' NAMES

Mr. Tom Cossitt (Leeds-Grenville): Madam Speaker, I am somewhat shocked to hear the Solicitor General say that he will not confirm this question; maybe it is because of the lie detector test he took in Montreal yesterday.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Cossitt: Seriously, his government has already confirmed it in an answer given by the Parliamentary Secretary to the President of Privy Council. I know he did not say anything about Ralph Branscombe, so I remind him of that.

By prefacing my supplementary question, could I say that I discussed on different occasions—and the last time was as recently as this morning—the Taschereau papers with Mr. Igor Gouzenko. Will the Solicitor General at least tell the