

of what cabinet is doing is factual and not just an opinion, of course, is something that I cannot accept.

Senator Yuzyk: But this was the opinion of a leading scientist. I think we have to have a lot of patience to find out what the government intends to do in such important matters as this.

CONSUMER AND CORPORATE AFFAIRS

MAJOR CHAIN STORES—ALLEGATIONS OF DEMANDS FOR REBATES FROM SMALL BUSINESSES

Hon. Nathan Nurgitz: Honourable senators, I have a question for the Minister of State for Economic Development. Would the minister indicate if the government is intending to act on the request by the Canadian Apparel Manufacturers Institute that the issue of rebates being demanded of small manufacturers by both the Hudson Bay Company and the Simpson Company be investigated both from the perspective of the effect it is having on small industry and in terms of its cost to the consumer?

Hon. H. A. Olson (Minister of State for Economic Development): I will have to take that question as notice.

THE CONSTITUTION

CONFERENCE AT WOLFVILLE, NOVA SCOTIA—ABSENCE OF GOVERNMENT REPRESENTATIVES

Hon. Heath Macquarrie: Honourable senators, I would like to direct a question to my genial and eloquent friend, the Leader of the Government in the Senate. It relates to a very important Atlantic Canada conference on the Constitution of Canada held recently in Acadia University in Wolfville which was attended by all the maritime premiers and members of the Atlantic Progressive Conservative caucus including my colleague, Senator Smith. Can the minister indicate why no member of the government attended this significant gathering, or if it was ever suggested that senatorial members of the government or senatorial supporters of the government might attend and thus show Atlantic Canada a degree of interest in their contribution to a major national issue?

Hon. Raymond J. Perrault (Leader of the Government): Honourable senators, I understand that that conference was held last weekend when there was another event of some national significance held in Winnipeg at which a great many Canadians gathered to discuss the problems of many parts of Canada including Atlantic Canada. There was difficulty for many of the ministers as a result of their efforts to attend the Atlantic conference.

Senator Macquarrie: Just for clarification, I was wondering about the attendance of members of the government during the two-and-a-half days before the Winnipeg conclave.

Senator Perrault: Of course, the Winnipeg conclave required a great deal of preparatory work.

TRANSPORT

ATLANTIC CANADA—PASSENGER AND FREIGHT FACILITIES

Hon. Robert Muir: Honourable senators, I want to direct my question to the Minister of State for Economic Development. I should think that economic development in any country involves the transportation of people and goods in that country. This leads me to the question I want to pose to the minister. Of course, he will not have the answer today, but this will serve as notice to him.

I would like to know why VIA Rail is having to resort to hiring buses to transport people in the Atlantic region because their rail liners are so overcrowded. VIA Rail, at great cost, is hiring buses to transport people.

In the meantime Canadian National are stalling, as usual, with respect to transporting goods to the great province of Newfoundland by not having the necessary rolling stock located conveniently, and by having carloads of goods lying on sidings at the mainland ports while businessmen in Newfoundland are awaiting those goods that should be transported as quickly as possible.

In so many words, Mr. Minister, it would appear to me that Canadian National and VIA Rail are continuing a practice started some years ago. They are showing a profit and Dr. Bandeen boasts about it, but they are making it difficult for people to use, and so are discouraging them from using, Canadian National facilities. They are driving business away, and thereby reducing the need for rolling stock, freight cars and passenger cars to the point where they are reducing employment in that particular region of Canada. I know it is a difficult problem right across the country, particularly in the west in respect of the handling of wheat, and so on.

Hon. H. A. Olson (Minister of State for Economic Development): As the honourable senator indicated, I would have to take this question as notice. It would be helpful if he could indicate to me—or send the information to my office—the places where this has happened, and I shall refer the question to the Minister of Transport who will provide an answer to it.

ATOMIC ENERGY OF CANADA LIMITED

PORT HAWKESBURY AND GLACE BAY—REPORTED SHUTDOWN OF HEAVY WATER PLANTS

Hon. H. A. Olson (Minister of State for Economic Development): Honourable senators, I wish to reply to Senator Muir's question of June 25 regarding the possibility of cutbacks in the production of heavy water at the Port Hawkesbury and Glace Bay plants in Nova Scotia.

There has been no change in the situation since I replied to the same question of the honourable senator on June 11. I would like to take this opportunity to stress again that there are no plans to cut back on production at the heavy water plants in Nova Scotia.