

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. Argumentative questions can come from either side of the House.

An hon. Member: But some are based on fact.

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FINANCE

AIR TRANSPORTATION TAX—SUGGESTION THAT SAVING RESULTING FROM ABANDONMENT OF PICKERING AIRPORT WOULD OFFSET TAX

Mr. Sinclair Stevens (York-Simcoe): Mr. Speaker, as the spending budget of the Minister of Finance contemplates a 100 per cent increase in the air transportation tax, and bearing in mind the minister's statement that the air transportation tax increase is necessary to offset heavy deficits in airport construction and operations, would the Minister of Finance indicate if cutbacks in such airport construction are under consideration and, in particular, is he aware that if the Pickering airport development scheme is scrapped the savings in that cost alone would be enough to offset the air transportation tax?

Hon. John N. Turner (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, I would hope that the Minister of Transport and I will be allowed to respond to both questions put by the hon. member for York-Simcoe and by the hon. member for Mississauga at the same time. I would be glad to answer in detail when we get to the bill currently before the House.

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AIRPORTS

PICKERING—SUGGESTED ABANDONMENT OF PROJECT—GOVERNMENT POSITION

Mr. Sinclair Stevens (York-Simcoe): Mr. Speaker, my supplementary question is directed to the Minister of Transport. In view of the fact it is now apparent that the Pickering airport if built may be sitting in splendid isolation with no suitable roads to it or services, will the minister indicate if consideration is being given to shelving plans for the construction of this unfortunate mistake and, if so, may we expect to hear from the government immediately that it does not plan to go ahead with the scheme?

● (1130)

Hon. Jean Marchand (Minister of Transport): Mr. Speaker, a few years ago—

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Nowlan: Far far away there was a prince and a princess.

Mr. Marchand (Langelier):—an agreement was signed between the government of Ontario and the present government to build an airport at Pickering. It was a perfect agreement. I have the text here. They have changed their minds since for reasons which I do not know. Mr. Rhodes

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in his telex said, "at this time". He does not say we should not proceed with the airport. What does it mean? In my letter to Mr. Davis I offered to meet Mr. Rhodes to discuss all those details. We will meet and discuss that because I do not know exactly what he means when he says "at this time". Is it a month, six months or a year? I do not know. He would like to discuss with us other facilities for any eventual airport. I do not intend to do anything before I meet with Mr. Rhodes and his men. I hope we will reach an agreement between two civilized governments.

PICKERING—INQUIRY WHETHER METPAC COMMITTEE HAS RECOMMENDED AGAINST CONSTRUCTION

Mr. Sinclair Stevens (York-Simcoe): Mr. Speaker, my supplementary is directed to the Acting Prime Minister. As the government pretends to be a government of restraint and it is reported that Metro Toronto Liberal backbenchers have constituted themselves as a committee to be known as Metpac in the hope they can lessen their bludgeoning by cabinet on local Toronto issues, would the Acting Prime Minister indicate if this newly constituted group has made any recommendation to cabinet concerning Pickering airport and in particular has it recommended, at least as an expenditure saving device, the discontinuance of this needless development?

Hon. Mitchell Sharp (Acting Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, Metpac is a very informal group of Liberal members. I would remind my hon. friend that we have most of the seats in Toronto, so we are representative of Toronto. This is not a committee made up only of backbenchers. It includes cabinet ministers. We have many interesting discussions. We discussed the Pickering airport and many other matters. It is a very useful forum. I regret very much that we do not have a representative from the constituency of the hon. member.

PICKERING—REQUEST FOR RECONSIDERATION OF DECISION TO CONSTRUCT

Mr. Andrew Brewin (Greenwood): Mr. Speaker, I have a supplementary question for the Minister of Transport. In light of the fact that the council of the city of Toronto unanimously on February 5 and 6 opposed the expenditure of public funds on a second airport in the area, and the chairman of Metro Toronto has expressed the same view, and in light of the fact that the province of Ontario has now refused to provide the necessary roads and services for the Pickering airport and because it is clearly indicated that what the minister told us about a one runway airport is not true and that it is planned to expand the airport, in view of these things will the minister, in light of his promises and those of the Prime Minister, now undertake to review the whole project and seriously consider abandoning or postponing it and so live up to the words he and the Prime Minister expressed in this House?

Hon. Jean Marchand (Minister of Transport): Mr. Speaker, when the agreement was signed between the government of Ontario and the federal government we thought that it was a serious agreement and that it meant something. Today, they have decided to change their minds and want to meet with us. I have no objection to