

Oral Questions

Hon. Benoît Bouchard (Minister of Employment and Immigration): I have said many times that a Government cannot afford to give in to demonstrations and occurrences of the kind that are being used in Montreal to challenge Government decisions, otherwise it may be faced with this type of situation on a regular basis. However, we have given a great deal of thought to the issue raised by the Hon. Member for Argenteuil—Papineau, and I think that Canada has a tradition of considering that in cases like these, the family as well as the individual aspect should be examined. The Hon. Member's point is well taken, and I intend to ask my officials at the Department of Employment and Immigration to issue immediately permits allowing these three women who are—

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Bouchard: Mr. Speaker, this is very important, the entry of the three women whose husbands are in Montreal. This does not in any way prejudice a decision on whether or not they have refugee status. This is merely to reunite the family, the father and mother and there are a few children involved as well. Once again, the decision on whether or not they have refugee status will be made in accordance with other criteria. We are, however, allowing them to come to Canada right away.

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CANADA POST CORPORATION**ALLEGED PLAN TO CLOSE RURAL POST OFFICES—MINISTER'S POSITION**

Mr. Alfonso Gagliano (Saint-Léonard—Anjou): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister in charge of Canada Post. The Minister, appearing before the Committee on Government Operations, stated that Canada Post had no plan for nor any list of rural post office shutdowns. But, yesterday afternoon, Mr. Jack Van Dusen, spokesman for Canada Post admitted that the Foothills, Alberta, plan to shut down 200 post offices across Canada this year is exactly that. Who speaks the truth, the Minister or Mr. Jack Van Dusen?

[English]

Hon. Harvie Andre (Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs): Mr. Speaker, what I said in committee yesterday stands, that in fact there is no list of 200 or 20 or 2,000 post offices which are scheduled for closing. What I said in a letter to all Members of Parliament, which the Hon. Member should read, is that when a postmaster quits, retires or wants to leave, or we lose the lease on the post office, and so on, it will be examined to see whether, in view of changing demographics and circumstances, that type of service continues to be appropriate. Over the next five years we will be increasing the number of outlets by 6,000, not decreasing them.

QUERY CONCERNING ALLEGED LIST

Mr. Alfonso Gagliano (Saint-Léonard—Anjou): Mr. Speaker, if there is no list, as the Minister says, how can he give 90 days' notice to consult Canadians? Why does the Minister not tell Canada Post to make the list public so that Canadians can have the necessary time to consult and to decide whether or not they want the post office the way it is now or a new post office which would be just a stand at which stamps are sold, something which is now being offered to them? Will the Minister come clean with Canadians?

• (1440)

Hon. Harvie Andre (Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs): Mr. Speaker, I am rapidly reaching the conclusion that the only way I can stop the repetition of these questions is to fabricate an imaginary list and give it to the Hon. Member so that he can run around the country scaring people. There is no list. I am sorry, there is no list.

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TRADE**CANADA-UNITED STATES NEGOTIATIONS—INVESTMENT ISSUE**

Mr. Steven W. Langdon (Essex—Windsor): Mr. Speaker, under the circumstances my question is for the Deputy Prime Minister. The Minister for International Trade has said today that the Prime Minister wished to discuss investment as an issue in the free trade talks with the Premiers, even though Simon Reisman has no mandate to negotiate this matter. Will the Minister confirm that this is because the United States has asked for greater freedom for its investors as yet one more concession in the free trade talks?

Hon. Pat Carney (Minister for International Trade): Mr. Speaker, I can confirm that we have made no such concession to the United States. The Hon. Member is correct when he says that the Cabinet has not given the negotiators any mandate in this area beyond, of course, trade-related investment, which is what was specified in the original proposals between the Prime Minister and the President. The purpose of tonight's discussion is simply to hear the views of the Premiers on this matter because no mandate has been struck by Cabinet for the negotiators. The whole process of consultation with the Premiers, the private sector, and the provinces is an exercise in collecting and listening to all of the groups, all of the players and all of the people of Canada who have an interest in the free trade discussions.

Mr. Langdon: Frankly, one wonders. Why collect views if the subject is not on the bargaining table?

ROLE OF PROVINCES

Mr. Steven W. Langdon (Essex—Windsor): Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the Minister a supplementary question on a