

Oral Questions

[Translation]

LAY-OFFS AT CHARLES DE GAULLE AIRPORT—MEASURES TO IMPROVE SERVICE

Mr. Claude Wagner (Saint-Hyacinthe): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Prime Minister.

Yesterday I asked the Minister of Transport a question concerning the possibility of 82 per cent of Air Canada staff being laid off at Charles de Gaulle airport and the Minister of Transport undertook to report to the House.

Today, the staff went on strike. I want to know whether the Prime Minister can indicate to the House first of all, if it has become government policy that Air Canada management lay off its staff with a view to assigning its operations to another company, in this case to the "Union des transports aériens de Paris" and second, what does the government intend to do to facilitate the return of passengers who are held up because of the cancelled flight of the DC-8 to Canada which was occasioned by this strike?

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, I am not aware of this problem, but I thank the hon. member for raising it and I shall see to it that the department provides an answer.

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[English]

COMBINES

PROPOSED TAKEOVER OF ARGUS CORPORATION BY POWER CORPORATION—REQUEST FOR TABLING OF REPORT OF GOVERNMENT INVESTIGATOR

Mr. Edward Broadbent (Oshawa-Whitby): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Prime Minister. When about a month ago the Prime Minister said the government was concerned about the possibility of a takeover of Argus Corporation by the Power Corporation, I asked him whether he would investigate it and he said that was being done. Since at the same time the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs announced that Mr. Robert Bertrand, the chief anti-trust investigator of the government, was going to embark upon an investigation of this specific takeover bid, would the Prime Minister tell the House whether this investigation has been completed and, if so, would the government make the report available to members of the House?

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, I think the investigation must have been an in-department study. I do not know its exact nature, but I can tell the House that my decision announced in the House yesterday afternoon was the result of discussion of the matter in cabinet, and particularly discussion between the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs and myself.

● (1410)

PROPOSED TAKEOVER OF ARGUS CORPORATION BY POWER CORPORATION—REQUEST FOR CLARIFICATION OF PRIME MINISTER'S STATEMENT ON GOVERNMENT ATTITUDE

Mr. Edward Broadbent (Oshawa-Whitby): Mr. Speaker, I have a supplementary question relating to the Prime

[Mr. Trudeau.]

Minister's assertion in the House yesterday and subsequently at a press conference that the government's position on the Power-Argus takeover, as well as any others that may take place before the royal commission brings forth its findings, was a neutral one. Will he clarify that position in light of the judgment of some that by saying he would not prevent the takeover of Argus by Power the conclusion one could reach is that this is, in fact, a go ahead signal to the Power Corporation to make and succeed with such a takeover bid during the next 12 months because they would clearly understand that the government would do nothing?

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member says this is a judgment by some, but obviously it is not the judgment by others. It seems to me that kind of judgment would be arrived at by some very tortuous logic. The position of this government is that when we see nothing illegal and we have no policy against a thing, the government should not intervene just for the purpose of stopping it, which would probably be the hon. member's position.

PROPOSED TAKEOVER OF ARGUS CORPORATION BY POWER CORPORATION—REASON GOVERNMENT COULD NOT TAKE ACTION SIMILAR TO THAT IN CASES OF STEVE ROMAN AND HOME OIL

Mr. Edward Broadbent (Oshawa-Whitby): Mr. Speaker, in view of the brilliant logic of the government in the past that led it to conclude that, in the cases of proposed actions in the uranium field by Mr. Steve Roman and in the petroleum field by Home Oil, the government should announce a moral position in advance, indicating that legislation might be forthcoming if a certain course of action were taken, could the Prime Minister, by whatever process of logic he wants, explain to the House why the government could not have done the same in the present circumstances concerning the Power-Argus Corporation situation?

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): For the very simple reason, Mr. Speaker, that in the case of Home Oil the government had and was developing a position on foreign ownership, and in the case of uranium the government had jurisdiction over the area and the legal instrument to act. This involved a matter of defining with some precision our policy for the long term. In the matter of concentrations of economic power, as I explained to the House yesterday, there are some advantages to the Canadian economy in such concentrations, particularly when it comes to competing with large multinationals who operate in Canada, or in other markets in which we are operating. It is because of this, that there may be advantages and disadvantages to this kind of a takeover, the government announced the royal commission and remained, as I said, neutral by not interfering in an area in which it had no legal obligation to act.