

HOUSING

REQUEST FOR STATEMENT ON MEASURES TO OFFSET
DECLINE IN STARTS

Mr. John Gilbert (Broadview): My question is directed to the Prime Minister. In view of the serious decline in housing starts in the first nine months of this year, what immediate steps does the right hon. gentleman intend taking to help solve this serious problem other than setting up a ministry of housing and urban affairs?

Mr. Speaker: Order. I suggest to the hon. member that he is inviting a general statement which should not be made during the question period.

Mr. Gilbert: I wonder if I might ask a supplementary question—

Mr. Speaker: The hon. member cannot ask a supplementary to a question which has been disallowed, but the Chair will permit him to ask another question.

Mr. Gilbert: Would the Minister without Portfolio responsible for housing make a statement on motions with regard to the serious problem arising from the decline in housing starts and tell us what immediate steps he proposes to take to deal with it?

Hon. Robert K. Andras (Minister without Portfolio): I shall be glad to refer to the matter during the remarks I hope to make in the course of the debate on the address. I shall probably allude to the fact that housing starts are taking an upward turn and that September starts were at the rate of 185,000—

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

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POST OFFICE

TERMINATION OF LEGAL ROLE OF MINISTER OF COM-
MUNICATIONS AS HEAD OF DEPARTMENT

Mr. Heath Macquarrie (Hillsborough): I should like to direct a question to the Prime Minister. In view of the fact that the Minister of Communications is still the Postmaster General of Canada and that the hon. member for Longueuil has the problems but not the portfolio, can the Prime Minister advise us whether we may soon expect the introduction of legislation to correct this seemingly imperfect situation?

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Yes, Mr. Speaker. I thank the hon. member for being so helpful. We did announce yesterday through the mouth of the Governor General that we would be asking the House to approve a minister of state system, and it would be my intention to ensure that my hon. friend from Longueuil shall at that time be a minister of state in charge of the Post Office. I hope the opposition will co-operate with us in expediting this arrangement.

Mr. Hees: Don't you worry about us.

Inquiries of the Ministry

RURAL CLOSURES—AMELIORATION OF POLICY

Hon. W. G. Dinsdale (Brandon-Souris): My question is for the Minister without Portfolio with responsibility for the postal services. Under the new and more humane approach he announced, will he be reversing government policy on the closure of rural post offices which has had such a devastating impact on the stability of rural communities?

Mr. Speaker: I am not sure that the question has been asked in the proper terms. But the minister, I am sure, is anxious that he be given an opportunity to reply.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

[Translation]

Hon. Jean-Pierre Côté (Minister without Portfolio): Mr. Speaker, I cannot quite accept the assertion of the hon. member that the closing down of some post offices has had such disastrous consequences. But as I took over the department I decided that no more post offices would be closed until that matter has been reviewed.

[English]

Mr. Craig Stewart (Marquette): My supplementary question is directed to the minister in charge of the Post Office. Will the present criteria continue to be used in considering the closure of rural post offices?

Mr. Speaker: Order. It seems to me that the minister's reply covered the question now being asked by the hon. member.

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[Translation]

INQUIRY OF THE MINISTRY

Mr. Réal Caouette (Témiscamingue): Mr. Speaker, I should like to put a question to the Minister of Transport.

In Hull, not very far from Parliament hill, there is a federal wharf where boats can be put afloat. However, as the "Escale" is anchored there, nobody can use it.

Is the minister taking steps now to get the old "Escale" out of the way?

Mr. Speaker: The hon. member has made a representation and he must take it for granted that the minister will consider the matter.

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[English]

URBAN AFFAIRS

PROPOSED ESTABLISHMENT OF STANDING COMMITTEE

Mr. Lincoln M. Alexander (Hamilton West): I should like to direct a question to the Prime Minister, Mr. Speaker. In keeping with the new thinking which the government has now adopted in relation to urban problems—a change which I suggest, with all respect, has