

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Tuesday, April 22, 1975

The House met at 2 p.m.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[English]

PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE

REFERENCE TO PURCHASES MADE FOR OFFICIAL
RESIDENCE—MOTION UNDER S.O. 43

Mr. Tom Cossitt (Leeds): Mr. Speaker, I rise under the provisions of Standing Order 43 to seek leave to move a motion arising out of certain purchases made at public expense for the Prime Minister's official residence at Sussex Drive. I would move:

That in view of the fact that the Prime Minister has purchased at public expense \$337 worth of matches and \$385 worth of candles for his official residence, the House requests the Prime Minister to state whether these purchases indicate a need for enlightenment in high places or whether in view of the failure of government policies to deal with the galloping cost of living the Prime Minister has finally adopted as his motto the title of the popular song, "I'm beginning to see the light."

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

[English]

AIR CANADA

SUGGESTED EXTENSION OF TERMS OF REFERENCE OF
INQUIRY TO INCLUDE ACCOUNTING PROCEDURES—REASON
FOR EXECUTIVES LEAVING COMPANY

Mr. Elmer M. MacKay (Central Nova): Mr. Speaker, I have one or two questions for the Minister of Transport or, in his absence, the Prime Minister. Perhaps I could address them to the Acting Prime Minister. I should like to ask the Acting Prime Minister, now that an inquiry is apparently to be held into the affairs of Air Canada pursuant to the Inquiries Act, whether he can assure the House that upon additional evidence being presented concerning other areas of Air Canada's activities, the terms of reference will be extended?

Hon. Mitchell Sharp (Acting Prime Minister): I expect my hon. friend the Minister of Transport will be here shortly and will answer questions about the inquiry which has been decided upon. It is my understanding that the inquiry will relate to the particular charges and reports which have been made so far.

Mr. MacKay: The Acting Prime Minister will surely be aware that conditions in the Winnipeg finance section of

Air Canada are causing great consternation. Will he consider taking steps to inquire why the finance section has become so chaotic and ineffective that a good percentage of the loss incurred by the airline, over \$1 million recently, was due to poor accounting and collecting procedures?

Mr. Sharp: It is my understanding that the inquiry will relate to the accounting procedures of Air Canada.

Mr. MacKay: Perhaps the Acting Prime Minister will also take steps to find out, on a frank and factual basis, why so many capable executives have left Air Canada in recent years, including the present chief executive officer of Eaton's, whose talents the airline could ill afford to lose and whether this exodus has any significance in terms of the way in which Air Canada is being managed and directed.

SUGGESTION INQUIRY SHOULD BE BROAD IN SCOPE

Mr. J. H. Horner (Crowfoot): Does the Acting Prime Minister not believe that if an inquiry is launched on a very narrow basis, while still including accounting procedures, the committee of the House studying the annual report of Air Canada might find that answers to many questions are refused on the grounds that the subject is sub judice? Does he not therefore agree that it would be wrong to embark upon a narrow inquiry and that it would be better to hold a broad inquiry covering the whole aspect of the management of Air Canada?

Hon. Mitchell Sharp (Acting Prime Minister): I do not follow the logic of the hon. member. If the inquiry were to be very broad it would preclude to an even greater extent the normal cross-examination which might take place on the estimates. The purpose of the government is to assist parliament in getting at the facts.

Mr. Horner: This way, excuses will be made and there will be no facts given to us.

An hon. Member: It is the opposition which has been asking for the inquiry.

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LABOUR CONDITIONS

STRIKE OF LONGSHOREMEN IN QUEBEC—REQUEST FOR
REPORT ON PROGRESS OF NEGOTIATIONS—GOVERNMENT
ACTION TO SETTLE

Mr. J. M. Forrestall (Dartmouth-Halifax East): Mr. Speaker, may I ask the Minister of Labour whether he can give the House some information with respect to the situation in the river ports and tell us specifically what