

Oral Questions

[Translation]

HOUSE OF COMMONSPRESENCE IN GALLERY OF DESIGNATED MINISTER OF
EMPLOYMENT OF FRANCE

Mr. Speaker: Order. I wish to draw the attention of the House to the presence in our gallery of Mr. Jack Ralite, designated Minister of Employment in the French National Assembly.

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[English]

PUBLIC WORKS

USE OF MUNICIPAL WASTES TO GENERATE STEAM

Mr. Jean-Robert Gauthier (Ottawa-Vanier): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Public Works. For several years now, the federal Government, the Ontario Government, and the Regional Municipality of Ottawa-Carleton have been studying the feasibility of using municipal wastes generated within the region as a fuel to produce steam to heat and cool federal buildings. The Hon. Member for Ottawa Centre opposed that when it was proposed in the LeBreton Flats area, and I took a strong stand against it in the Overbrook area.

My question to the Minister relates to the financing and the possible participation of Public Works Canada in this project. Given the environmental difficulties and the high costs of this project, will the Minister's Department take a position of instigating, promoting, or supporting this steam plant in the near future?

[Translation]

Hon. Roméo LeBlanc (Minister of Public Works): Mr. Speaker, strong representations from all Members in the Ottawa area led me to make the decision I communicated to the main parties concerned—the Province and the region's municipal governments—in a letter I signed this morning.

[English]

Four years ago when there was an appearance of a shortage of steam energy in the centretown area, we agreed to participate in the feasibility study of this project. However, conservation measures have worked even better than we had expected. For this reason, I have informed the province and the municipal authorities that the Department of Public Works and the National Capital Commission will not be proponents of this project.

● (1450)

CONSUMER AND CORPORATE AFFAIRSMONITORING OF EFFICIENCY GAINS FOLLOWING CORPORATE
MERGERS

Mr. Svend J. Robinson (Burnaby): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs. The Minister is well aware that in Canada in the past couple of years there has been a record number of mergers and takeovers, particularly foreign takeovers, which have often squeezed out smaller businesses. Under the Minister's proposed competition legislation there are absolutely no guarantees whatsoever that the efficiency gains which are promised by large corporations in exchange for allowing mergers will be passed on to consumers and effectively implemented. I would like to ask the Minister to explain why she has effectively knuckled under to the big business community in this important respect, and failed to protect consumers adequately by providing for assurances that efficiency gains will in fact be monitored and enforced.

Hon. Judy Erola (Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs): Mr. Speaker, frankly I am amused that the Hon. Member has asked this question in view of the fact that he has not himself had time to study the legislation. We have made some attempts to brief him about it, and he is basing his judgment on a very superficial press release.

I would suggest to the Hon. Member that he take some time to examine the Bill thoroughly. He would find that the Bill has indeed been strengthened. The conspiracy section has been strengthened. Indeed, we are calling for mandatory pre-notification in case of mergers. All of that never existed before. It is a much stronger Bill, and I suggest to the Hon. Member that he examine it thoroughly before he makes such statements.

Mr. Robinson (Burnaby): Mr. Speaker, I have seen the Bill and I have read the Bill. Given the whoops of joy from the business community, it is quite clear that the Bill was in fact ghost-written by John Turner's Bay Street buddies.

UNITED STATES AND CANADIAN LEGISLATION

Mr. Svend J. Robinson (Burnaby): Mr. Speaker, the Minister knows very well that the United States' trust-busting legislation is much tougher than the Minister's proposed Bill. Given the fact that there is no maximum ceiling whatsoever on market share before a merger can be effectively reviewed and presumed to be against the interests of consumers, how can the Minister explain to consumers, and particularly to small business, why this legislation is so much weaker than the equivalent American anti-trust legislation?

Hon. Judy Erola (Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs): Mr. Speaker, again I suggest to the Hon. Member that he does not understand the Bill. Otherwise he would not be making the outrageous statements that he is making in the House. This Bill is far stronger than previous legislation, and it is a Bill that faces the economic realities of Canada and of