

Oral Questions

Could the minister confirm to the House the reports in last week's newspapers in northeast Quebec that \$1 million had been allocated for reinstalling the instrument landing facilities at Val-D'or airport?

Hon. Jean Chrétien (President of the Treasury Board): Mr. Speaker, I am not directly concerned by this project. As a rule, the announcements are made in the House by the appropriate minister. The President of the Treasury Board has seldom the opportunity to announce the projects himself.

Mr. Caouette (Villeneuve): Mr. Speaker, I have a supplementary for the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs.

Could the minister tell the House whether he wants to look into the announcement published in newspapers that the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs himself has revealed that this amount of \$1 million would be earmarked for Val-d'Or airport?

Hon. André Ouellet (Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs): Mr. Speaker, I hope the hon. member will not object to spending such an important amount of money for thousands of fellow citizens in northeast Quebec.

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[English]

ST. LAWRENCE SEAWAY

INQUIRY WHETHER TOLLS WILL BE INCREASED

Mr. Jack Murta (Lisgar): Mr. Speaker, I should like to direct a question to the Minister of Transport. In view of the great concern expressed by a good many western shippers as well as central Canadian shippers, is the government going to make a ruling or decision on whether or not the St. Lawrence seaway tolls will be increased or will remain the same for the coming year?

Hon. Otto E. Lang (Minister of Transport): Mr. Speaker, there has been no government examination of the question of any change in St. Lawrence seaway rates. There has, however, in connection with the anti-inflation exercise, been a determination that at least for the immediate future no rates ought to be changed except as reflecting changes in cost. Therefore any major review of the rates in the next several months will in any case be precluded.

Mr. Murta: A supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. One of the reasons that the St. Lawrence seaway authority asked that the rates be increased was that costs were going up. Is the minister now saying that there will be an increase up to the 8 or 10 per cent ceiling, or, as a good many shippers have been asking, will the rates be frozen at the existing level?

Mr. Lang: Mr. Speaker, I indicated that no consideration had been given to any change, so for the time being no change whatever is being proposed. I added in addition to that a limitation which would arise out of our current program which would not allow us to go back and catch up past cost problems but only current cost problems, at least in the immediate future.

[Mr. Caouette (Villeneuve).]

UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

ALLEGED PREFERENTIAL TREATMENT OF CLAIMS BY LETTER CARRIERS—GOVERNMENT POSITION

Mr. Lincoln M. Alexander (Hamilton West): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Minister of Manpower and Immigration responsible for unemployment insurance. Can the minister advise why instructions went out this week to UIC regional offices telling them to make special arrangements to handle claims by letter carriers, and can he tell the House why this particular group is being given preferential treatment ahead of other eligible claimants?

Hon. Robert K. Andras (Minister of Manpower and Immigration): Mr. Speaker, they are not being given preferential treatment in the sense the hon. member is suggesting. They are fully entitled under the law to unemployment insurance benefits. Wherever we run into a mass situation requiring processing claims and we are aware of it, we try to make special administrative efforts to deal with them. The same thing applied to the General Motors lay-off or any automotive lay-off. I think it only fair to these people that we do this.

Mr. Alexander: Mr. Speaker, that is a very strange answer in light of the postal strike at this time. Can the minister explain why the normal waiting period has been waived for letter carriers, and why at least some regional UIC offices have been told to make sure that these claimants receive their first cheques by Saturday—that is, within 48 hours of establishing eligibility—and in fact to downgrade the claims of other Canadians in order to meet these requirements?

Mr. Andras: That is not the case, Mr. Speaker. There has been no waiving of the required legal waiting period for the letter carriers. That is applicable to them as it is to anyone else. We are simply attempting to expedite claims in what is a mass situation in terms of responding to the need, and we certainly try to do that with any claim.

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EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

SUGGESTED WITHDRAWAL FROM UNITED NATIONS IN VIEW OF PASSAGE OF RESOLUTION NAMING ISRAEL RACIST NATION

Mrs. Simma Holt (Vancouver-Kingsway): Mr. Speaker, I should like to address a question to the Secretary of State for External Affairs. In view of the resolution that opened proceedings in this House today, which was passed unanimously by the House, regarding the vicious acts on Monday in the United Nations, will the government consider withdrawing from the United Nations and working with other nations of goodwill in establishing an organization of nations that will restore the UN covenants of peace and justice in the international community?

Hon. Allan J. MacEachen (Secretary of State for External Affairs): Mr. Speaker, I want to make it clear that it is my view that, in approving this resolution, the members of the United Nations who voted for it have made a mockery of the principles and purposes for which the United Nations was created. However, in this imperfect