

Oral Questions

ENERGY

PROPOSED ENRICHED URANIUM PLANT AT JAMES BAY—
REASON FOR OPTIMISM OF FRANCE

Miss Flora MacDonald (Kingston and the Islands): Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Prime Minister. In view of the fact that French Interior Minister Poniatoski told a press conference on July 8 that he is more optimistic than when he came to Canada that the federal government will approve France's plan to build an enriched uranium plant in the James Bay area, will the Prime Minister tell the House what indication he or any of his minister's gave to Mr. Poniatoski that would have led him to this optimistic view of the federal government's agreement to such a proposal?

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, I might be able to volunteer an answer to that. It probably results from the fact that the pre-feasibility studies which were made known to the government at that time indicated that the case against the enriched uranium plant was not as clear-cut and obvious as some hon. members opposite make it. For that reason, I, personally, told Mr. Poniatoski that we would give very serious consideration to this pre-feasibility study. We said we would not reject the facts out of prejudice, but would study them very carefully.

PROPOSED ENRICHED URANIUM PLANT AT JAMES BAY—
POSSIBLE COMMITMENT TO GIVE REPLY TO FRANCE WITHIN
EIGHT MONTHS

Miss Flora MacDonald (Kingston and the Islands): Did the Prime Minister or any of his ministers agree during the French Interior Minister's visit to give a reply within six to eight months to the French government's proposal to build this enriched uranium plant to produce a product which cannot be used domestically and which, when exported, would add significantly to dangers of nuclear proliferation?

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, I certainly did not make that commitment and I feel quite certain that no minister did. The hon. member is making an argument which is contrary to the indications of the pre-feasibility study. I think that is the whole issue. We should look at this question objectively, not with our minds set in advance. I, personally, stated in this House that the government had a certain preconception against the plan, but that we were prepared to look at the facts. I hope that it is also the position of members opposite.

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COMMUNICATIONS

BELL RATE INCREASES—SUGGESTION MINISTER SUSPEND
HEARINGS PENDING AGREEMENT ON PROCEDURE

Mr. Cyril Symes (Sault Ste. Marie): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Minister of Communications arising out of the current CTC hearings on Bell Canada's application for urgent interim rate increases, to take effect August 1. In view of the serious procedural irregularities or at least

[Mr. Dupras.]

inadequacies, in connection with the present Bell hearings, namely the inadequate length of time for the interveners to examine relevant material, the absence of a pre-hearing, the allocation of only five days to the hearings themselves and the failure by the CTC to determine whether an "emergency" in fact exists, irregularities so flagrant as to prompt the representatives from the province of Quebec to boycott the proceedings, and in view of the minister's expressed approval of provincial participation, I ask the minister whether he will intervene at this point to suspend these hearings until appropriate and mutually-agreeable procedures have been established for dealing with this application?

[Translation]

Hon. Gérard Pelletier (Minister of Communications): Mr. Speaker, I do not think there is any question of the Minister of Communications trying to suspend hearings initiated by CTC. The minister does not have such powers. Regarding some parties appearing before CTC who would think they are denied their most normal rights, I think recourses are provided in the legislation and they could take advantage of them. Instead they chose to withdraw.

[English]

MINISTER'S POSITION ON BELL'S RAISING OF CAPITAL
THROUGH RATE INCREASES RATHER THAN ISSUANCE OF
SHARES

Mr. Cyril Symes (Sault Ste. Marie): In view of Bell's consistent failure to provide adequate residential services in rural areas, while devoting excessive effort and excessive funds to complex telecommunications gadgetry, can the minister inform the House whether the government shares Bell's position that investment capital for sophisticated telecommunications technology should be raised from subscribers, in the form of rate increases, rather than from capital markets or from shareholders?

[Translation]

Hon. Gérard Pelletier (Minister of Communications): Mr. Speaker, it is not directly to the government that Bell Canada has to present its arguments on that matter, but to the Canadian Transport Commission's Telecommunications Committee. I think that is what the company will be asked to do by the committee. The government will then weigh the decisions the commission will have to make.

[English]

DATE OF ESTABLISHMENT OF NEW REGULATORY BODY FOR
TELECOMMUNICATIONS

Mr. Cyril Symes (Sault Ste. Marie): In view of the crisis in telecommunications regulation and the fact that both consumer groups and provincial governments have lost confidence in the present system, can the minister tell us when he intends to set up the new regulatory body provided for in Bill C-5, recently passed by this House, and when he expects to achieve agreement on a new telecommunications policy for Canada, one that will, hopefully, contain a greater measure of direct public control over investment decisions and planning priorities?