

The statement of the Deputy Prime Minister on the first day of this debate was quite incredible.

Mr. Speaker, may I call it ten o'clock?

Mr. Railton: Will the hon. member permit a question?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Since it is ten o'clock, the hon. member for Welland (Mr. Railton) requires the unanimous consent of the House to ask a question of the hon. member for Vancouver South (Mr. Fraser). Is there unanimous consent?

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Is the hon. member for Vancouver South ready to receive the question?

● (2202)

Mr. Fraser: Mr. Speaker, of course I am always prepared to answer a question from my hon. friend.

Mr. Railton: Mr. Speaker, I just want to ask the hon. member for Vancouver South if he realizes that the United States steel industry does produce 48-inch pipe but not necessarily high pressure, and that Canadian pipe mills can produce 48-inch pipe just as well as U.S. mills, either high pressure or low pressure.

Mr. Fraser: Mr. Speaker, I would not make the mistake of pretending to be an expert in these matters. What I have been able to learn is that there is grave doubt among both management and labour that 48-inch high pressure pipe can be produced easily. There is certainly doubt about the feasibility of this and the expertise available. So I must say that that is all I have learned to this moment. That is why I am raising the question, and surely my hon. friend will assist me and speak to members of his own party to be sure that the question we have raised and discussed tonight is adequately answered in the interests of all Canadians.

PROCEEDINGS ON ADJOURNMENT MOTION

[English]

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 40 deemed to have been moved.

[Translation]

PUBLIC WORKS—DATE OF ESTABLISHMENT OF POST OFFICE IN
ROUYN, QUEBEC

Mr. Gilles Caouette (Témiscamingue): Mr. Speaker, on February 2 last, I put a question to the Minister of Public Works (Mr. Buchanan) about the construction of a federal building in Rouyn. I experienced some difficulty in trying to remind the minister that in 1972, the decision had been taken to build a post office in Rouyn.

Adjournment Debate

In a letter dated March 16, the then postmaster general, the Hon. Jean-Pierre Côté, indicated that the construction was expected to begin in 1972-73. On May 11, 1972, the Minister of Public Works replied that an amount of \$200,000 had been earmarked for 1972-73, \$300,000 for 1973-74 and \$250,000 for 1974-75. On December 12, 1972, Public Works officials met with the civic authorities of Rouyn and Noranda. On July 9, 1973, a letter was effectively sent to the architect indicating that his services were required for the construction of that building and on January 24, 1974, a letter confirmed the right of the architect to hire consulting engineers. But of course we should not forget that an election was held in July 1974. Apparently that occasion was used to play politics. On June 23, 1976, that is a year after the election, we suddenly realized that the government has decided to hire a different architect. The first one was dropped and a new one appointed to spread confusion.

On July 13, 1976, as a result of representations made by my predecessor, the mayor of the city of Rouyn and the local chamber of commerce, a retraction was made and finally it was confirmed that the contracts were being given to the architect who was first contacted in 1973. To summarize, on December 5, 1977, in reply to my letter, the minister advised me that Treasury Board had in fact approved the project on May 20, 1976. Note that this is four years after the initial decision.

Unfortunately, on January 20, 1978, a Public Works civil servant got in touch with the responsible architect advising him that there would be a one-year delay, that construction would probably not start before February 1, 1979, and that the offices would most probably be ready by August 1, 1980. So, on February 2, I put my question to the minister asking about the moneys involved. What has been done with the credits voted in 1972-73, 1974-75 for a total amount of \$750,000? What has happened to them? I have had no reply to that question. And with regard to the unemployment problem we are now studying, statistics dated February 7, 1977, indicate that in northwestern Quebec, the unemployment rate is 25.8 per cent.

● (2207)

So I asked him a second question: could he accelerate the construction of that post office particularly in view of the circumstances prevailing in northwestern Quebec where the unemployment rate is as high as 25.8 per cent? I asked the minister that simple question but I got no answer. This is why I decided to ask the same question tonight to get an answer. I do so to get a real answer and not only a partisan answer. We know there will probably be an election in 1978 or in early 1979 and the letter from Mr. Havor of the Department of Public Works makes me believe that once again the building of that post office will serve political interests. As I said earlier, after the 1974 election they hired a different architect. So we the people from that area are asking that the initial undertaking be met and that local architects be hired as would be justified.