

Oral Questions

year 1978-79 will be much higher than the \$525 million predicted by the present Postmaster General last June.

Does the hon. gentleman intend to pass on these unplanned, increased deficits to the taxpayer by increasing postal rates again in 1979? If so, what will be the proposed rates, and what classes of mail will be affected?

Hon. J. Gilles Lamontagne (Postmaster General): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the hon. member for Brandon-Souris picking up the question put by the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre in a motion at the beginning of the sitting.

As the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre said, "Enough is enough". But enough is enough of deficit, not necessarily the postal rates. That is exactly what we are trying to do, to reduce the deficit of the Post Office. That is why we moved so wisely by putting Bill C-8 through the House, so that we would have labour stability during at least another year.

Also, at the postal users conference, most of our users asked us to administer the Post Office as closely as possible on business principles. This means that we have to be very fair about the share which is paid by the users themselves, which must be their fair share, and the share paid by the general public. That is what we are going to do when we decide to raise rates. It is under consideration at the moment, and the hon. member should hear about it soon.

Mr. Dinsdale: A supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. There are some post offices around the world making profits today. This deficit is created by the continuing turmoil in the postal service.

The Postmaster General referred to postal users. I wonder if he has discussed the proposed increases with the publishers of periodicals and the other major users of the postal service who must have at least a six-month lead time before the implementation of new rates in order to plan their affairs and meet other rising costs. The Postmaster General neglected to consult with substantial post office users before the last round of increases. Has he met with these major customers this time around? If not, when does he intend to do so, in order that they might make their necessary plans?

● (1442)

Mr. Lamontagne: Mr. Speaker, the turmoil in the Post Office is very often caused by the remarks of some opposition members. There is no turmoil in the Post Office.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Lamontagne: I wonder where the hon. member for Brandon-Souris was at the time of the two-day postal users conference in Toronto: he was not there, of course. I was there. I consulted with at least 1,800 people from across Canada who use the postal service, including publishers, editors and others. I met with directors of most of the magazines and publishers in Canada. They have a very good opinion: they told us to administer the Post Office in a way that makes it as close as possible to operating a business. As far as postal rates are

[Mr. Dinsdale.]

concerned, they realize that at the moment we have the lowest rates in the industrialized world.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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ENERGY**PETRO-CANADA PURCHASE OF PACIFIC PETROLEUMS SHARES—
EFFECT ON COMMON CARRIER PRINCIPLE**

Mr. F. Oberle (Prince George-Peace River): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the President of the Privy Council: it is with regard to his responsibility for the Alaska pipeline.

My concern is the Petro-Can takeover of Pacific Petroleum which, of course, has a subsidiary known as Westcoast Transmission which, in turn, is a partner in the pipeline consortium. Is the minister concerned over the fact that such ownership by the government would not only offend the common carrier principle but would put the government in a precarious position with regard to establishing and administering guidelines to which they themselves would later have to adhere? Is it the intention of the government to ask Petro-Can to divest itself of the interests in Westcoast Transmission after the acquisition?

Hon. Allan J. MacEachen (Deputy Prime Minister and President of Privy Council): No, Mr. Speaker, I do not see any difficulties arising from this transaction, with regard to the northern gas pipeline, in any particular raised by the hon. member.

Mr. Oberle: Can the minister indicate whether there has been a reaction from the industry, other partners in the pipeline consortium and the government of the United States? After all, this is a strange and serious departure from the principles which earned this consortium the right to build the pipeline in the first place.

Mr. MacEachen: No, Mr. Speaker, to my knowledge, there have been no representations from any sources with regard to this situation.

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AIRPORTS**CALGARY INTERNATIONAL—ZONING BYLAWS RESPECTING
CONSTRUCTION OF NEARBY BUILDINGS**

Mr. Eldon M. Woolliams (Calgary North): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Minister of Transport: it deals with the safety of air traffic particularly as it applies to the Aeronautics Act.

My question is twofold. By an order in council passed in 1977, No. 2449, hundreds of houses in the city of Calgary adjacent to the airport and quite some distance from it were affected. A zoning bylaw was passed governing, probably, two things, height and noise with regard to hundreds of houses. I wrote the deputy minister on October 31.