

Oral Questions

[Translation]

REGIONAL INDUSTRIAL EXPANSION

PICARD REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS—MINISTER'S POSITION

Hon. Jean Lapierre (Shefford): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Regional Industrial Expansion and Minister of State for Science and Technology. My colleague for Ottawa-Centre referred to the Picard Report. I am certain that he forgot about the recommendation on the Space Agency, which he should support as much as we, Liberals.

My question to the Minister is this. He is now blaming the Senators for sitting on Bill C-22. Yet, the Minister himself has been sitting on the Picard Report for much longer. Could the Minister take the lead and show that he can act quickly by making the required decisions as concerns the Picard Report? Instead of waiting for eleven new recommendations, could he not follow up on the first 86?

Hon. Robert de Cotret (Minister of Regional Industrial Expansion and Minister of State for Science and Technology): Mr. Speaker, we have already taken action about several of the 86 recommendations which were before us. First, I must tell the Hon. Member that many of these recommendations were addressed mostly to the municipal and provincial governments. Naturally, these recommendations were referred to the proper government level because we do not want to impinge on other jurisdictions. We have taken action about many other recommendations. As for the rest, as I have said many times, we shall be giving a complete response to the Picard Report in the coming days.

REQUEST THAT MINISTER ACT IMMEDIATELY

Hon. Jean Lapierre (Shefford): Mr. Speaker, I have a supplementary. The Minister referred earlier to certain figures and pretended that there had been an increase in job creation. If he had read the report which has been tabled, he would realize that unemployment has in fact increased to 12.4 per cent in East Montreal and that there are now 8,000 more potential unemployed because of the age of certain industries. What I ask the Minister is this: Will he wait for these 8,000 workers to lose their jobs before taking action or will he do something immediately in line with the recommendations of the Action Committee and ensure that action is taken immediately instead of letting the situation deteriorate?

Hon. Robet de Cotret (Minister of Regional Industrial Expansion and Minister of State for Science and Technology): Mr. Speaker, we have certainly not let the situation deteriorate. We have created jobs in Greater Montreal. We have created jobs in East Montreal. It will give me great pleasure to provide you with a list of our investments in East Montreal if you want this information.

When I say that we are now looking at the Pichette Report, it is because we are doing just that, and we shall give our response to this report as soon as possible.

● (1450)

[English]

CANADA POST CORPORATION

CORPORATION'S FREEDOM TO ACT

Mr. Rod Murphy (Churchill): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister responsible for Canada Post. In a letter which the Prime Minister wrote this summer with regard to Canada Post he said:

A long term solution to these problems can only be worked out by the Corporation and its unions through compromise—

In a spirit of compromise, is there a true arm's length relationship between the Government and Canada Post? Is Canada Post free to drop its insistence upon franchising out existing work to drug stores which are often right across the street from existing post offices?

Hon. Harvie Andre (Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs): Mr. Speaker, as the shareholder of this Crown corporation, we require of Canada Post, as we do of every other Crown corporation, a corporate plan to indicate what it plans to achieve over a five-year span. It is updated annually.

As part of its corporate plan to improve service to Canadians the Post Office intends to open up some 6,000 postal outlets so that people can buy their postal services where they shop and where they can park at times more convenient to them.

The Government approved of that plan. If circumstances cause a change in the plan, which the corporation will bring to the Government's attention, we will, of course, consider it.

CORPORATION'S NEGOTIATING STANCE IN LABOUR DISPUTE

Mr. Rod Murphy (Churchill): Mr. Speaker, is the Government allowing Canada Post to negotiate freely? Does it have a complete open hand in negotiations, or does it have to come back to the Government to get permission to change its negotiating stance?

Hon. Harvie Andre (Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs): Mr. Speaker, I am not at the negotiating table. No representative of the Government is at the negotiating table. I have no influence on the decisions. This is being run by management. The negotiations which are going on are the same kind of negotiations that went on between the cabin attendants and Air Canada last year and between CNR and the railway workers.

The unions and the NDP are attempting to indicate that the Government is somehow orchestrating things. I understand what they are attempting to do, but there is no basis in fact to support those accusations.