

Oral Questions

the 50,000 limit, but we are involved with the Kampuchean and also with other refugees.

[Translation]

REQUEST FOR RE-ESTABLISHMENT OF AID PROGRAM

Mr. Bob Kaplan (York Centre): A supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. When he appeared before the committee, the minister also said that he had consulted with and been given support by the private sector. We know now that they are almost unanimously opposed to the proposed changes in the program. Therefore, what we have here are two instances of ineffective consultations and one instance of denied consultations, namely, by Mr. Couture. Will the minister undertake new consultations, or will he restore this excellent program to what it was before?

[English]

Hon. Lincoln M. Alexander (Minister of Labour): Mr. Speaker, I think it has already been indicated by the minister that there is, indeed, a great need in Cambodia. We have not given up the refugee program one bit, but there are two prongs to it: one happens to be the boat people, and the other happens to be those in Cambodia who are suffering from lack of food, who are in need of temporary shelter and who are in need of medical aid. Therefore, this is a good cause.

In terms of reversing ourselves, I have no knowledge at this time whether the minister will or will not, but my understanding is that he intends to proceed in accordance with the press release, which he has now on his desk, dated December 6.

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CONSUMER AFFAIRS

REPORTED TAKEOVER OF NEWSPAPER CHAIN BY ARGUS CORPORATION

Mr. Lloyd Axworthy (Winnipeg-Fort Garry): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs. There are now confirmed reports that the Argus Corporation is proposing a major takeover bid of the FP newspaper chain. Under these circumstances, we would have one of the largest economic conglomerates in the country taking control of one of the major newspaper chains.

I should like to ask the minister if the government has expressed any concern over this action in relation to how it would affect the public interest of this country. In particular, has the minister instructed the director of combines investigations to undertake an inquiry as to whether this proposed takeover would be in the public interest, and whether the government has any involvement in the case?

Hon. Allan Lawrence (Solicitor General and Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs): Mr. Speaker, the government has expressed concern. The director of investigations will certainly look at this matter.

[Mr. Alexander.]

Mr. Axworthy: A supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. Considering the imminence of the takeover bid, does the minister have any timetable in mind as to when the director of combines investigations will report? Does the minister also intend to make a public statement about the government's concern regarding this proposed takeover, and does he intend to take any immediate action to declare a moratorium on the takeover until the director has had an opportunity to fully assess and study the implications?

Mr. Lawrence: Mr. Speaker, as the hon. member knows, the director of investigations is an independent office. I imagine the director will require some time before he will be in a position to indicate whether a formal investigation is required.

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[Translation]

TRANSPORT

DAMAGE TO POINTE AU PIC WHARF—REQUEST THAT REPAIR BE EFFECTED AS SOON AS POSSIBLE

Mr. Charles Lapointe (Charlevoix): In view of the absence of the Minister of Transport, the minister of state for maritime transport and the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, I shall put my question to the right hon. Prime Minister. I should like to know whether the government has been advised of the very extensive damage caused to the Pointe-au-Pic wharf, which is one of the most important economic factors in that area, and whether the government would be willing to consider allocating special funds to undertake the urgent repairs to that marine structure with a view to saving this economic tool which is of such importance to the riding of Charlevoix?

Right Hon. Joe Clark (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, I should like to discuss the matter with the minister.

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AIR TRANSPORT

INQUIRY WHETHER QUÉBÉCAIR GROUP WILL BE FAVOURED IN PURCHASE OF NORDAIR

Mr. Dennis Dawson (Louis-Hébert): In view of the absence of the same people, Mr. Speaker, my question will be directed to the right hon. Prime Minister. Since he is an expert on easy solutions, and since the Gagnon group has now withdrawn its offer to buy Nordair, and now that Québecair is the only group left, does the Prime Minister intend to announce to the Canadian people before the holiday season—before Christmas—that the Québecair group's offer to purchase Nordair will be looked upon favourably?

Right Hon. Joe Clark (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, the sale of Nordair is a matter which is now under consideration