

● (1450)

Mr. Nielsen: Perhaps the Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce and Minister of Regional Economic Expansion will read the Prime Minister's remarks in *Hansard* tomorrow and the able to inform the House.

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INDUSTRY

INQUIRY RESPECTING CANADIAN GENERAL ELECTRIC CONTRACT

Hon. Erik Nielsen (Leader of the Opposition): Madam Speaker, I have a further question for the Prime Minister. Has the Government approved a five-year EDP contract involving Canadian General Electric in Peterborough in the amount of \$12.5 million, which is expected to generate 2,000 new jobs? Are the 2,000 jobs spread over the five-year period, or are 2,000 jobs generated each year of the approved contract?

[Translation]

Mr. André Maltais (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce and Minister of Regional Economic Expansion): Madam Speaker, I understand that action has already been taken by the Department. A formal answer will be given to the Leader of the Opposition as early as tomorrow.

[English]

APPROVAL OF CONTRACT

Hon. Erik Nielsen (Leader of the Opposition): Madam Speaker, obviously the Parliamentary Secretary is not in a position to answer the specific question which was: has the Government approved such a contract? That is the answer I will be expecting tomorrow.

[Translation]

Mr. André Maltais (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce and Minister of Regional Economic Expansion): Madam Speaker, the important thing is to check with the Department to what extent the project has been approved, because new facts have come to its attention within the last few weeks, and in order to provide an official answer, I shall have to check with the Department to determine exactly whether or not it has now given its approval.

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[English]

MEDICAL CARE

P.C. LEADERSHIP CANDIDATE'S VIEWS

Mr. D. M. Collenette (York East): Madam Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of National Health and Welfare. Does the Minister's Department have any studies which support the contention that 85 per cent of Canadians

Oral Questions

can afford private medicare, as proposed by Mr. Peter Pocklington?

Hon. Monique Bégin (Minister of National Health and Welfare): Madam Speaker, I heard on the news this morning, like everybody else I suppose, that Mr. Pocklington thinks 85 per cent of Canadians can afford medicare. I thought that gentleman, whom of course I do not know, was a good businessman. He will be a terrible Leader of the Opposition if he does not understand the complexity of twentieth century society.

Since when would the Government, with taxpayers' money, assume all the high risk which, by the way, generally amounts to one-third of a given population, not to 15 per cent? Since when would the Government, with taxpayers' money, assume all the high risk, leaving just the non-high risk group for the private sector to protect against supposed health problems? I think this is an unacceptable attitude. Maybe it is the one of all the other candidates for the Tory leadership. We do not know yet.

Madam Speaker: The Hon. Member for Dauphin.

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CANADIAN TRANSPORT COMMISSION

RULINGS ON RAILWAY BRANCH LINE ABANDONMENTS IN MANITOBA

Mr. Laverne Lewycky (Dauphin-Swan River): Madam Speaker, I thank the House that my constituency is Dauphin-Swan River as of yesterday, because of its unanimous consent.

My question is directed to the Minister of Transport. Could he indicate what is the value of hearings before the western division of the Canadian Transport Commission which have taken up a considerable amount of time on behalf of all intervenors—farmer-producers, businessmen, workers, and Members of Parliament—when these hearings always end up with a line being lost? How does the Minister explain that since 1975 some 17 hearings in Manitoba have all ended up, each and every single time, in favour of the railways, CP or CN, abandoning a line? Can the Minister explain this tarnished record of the western division of the CTC?

Hon. Jean-Luc Pepin (Minister of Transport): Madam Speaker, I am rather surprised by the question. At the moment we have kept in Canada 88 per cent, if I remember well, of the branchline system we had in the 1930s. I would have thought that this was a very high record of approval on the part of the CTC for the maintenance of these branchlines.

Madam Speaker: The Hon. Member for Dauphin-Swan River.

Mr. Lewycky: I just point out to the Minister that 100 per cent of all submissions has been in favour of the railways.