

*Oral Questions***ALGOMA STEEL**

Mr. Maurice Foster (Algoma): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Employment and Immigration.

The strike at Algoma Steel in Sault Ste. Marie was settled over a week ago, involving some 6,000 employees and having a devastating impact on the community.

Because only 1,000 employees have been called back to work so far and because of the estimates of reinstatement of jobs, it is estimated that most employees will not receive any UIC benefits until the end of December of this year.

What is the minister going to do about this travesty of justice to ensure that cheques are sent out to these employees who have been on strike for over four months.

Hon. Barbara McDougall (Minister of Employment and Immigration): Mr. Speaker, the rules that are being applied in the Algoma situation, which has been a long and unfortunate one, are the same as the rules that are applied in other situations.

The Algoma management has confirmed with my officials that something like 2,000 workers will be recalled in the next two or three weeks. To expedite claims, our officials in Sault Ste. Marie have set up temporary headquarters in the union hall to assist with claims and are planning to register all workers who will need unemployment insurance as efficiently as possible.

This is the normal procedure within UI in events like this.

Mr. Maurice Foster (Algoma): Mr. Speaker, I have a supplementary question.

Surely the minister cannot hide behind the unfair regulations and the UIC act. Thousands of families in the Algoma district face a Christmas without money unless the minister acts now.

I wonder if the minister would use the discretion she has under the act and the regulations to order that cheques be sent out immediately.

Hon. Barbara McDougall (Minister of Employment and Immigration): Mr. Speaker, I think the hon. member knows that this is not something the minister can simply wave a magic wand over.

Forty years of jurisprudence have gone into these kinds of decisions. We have asked our officials to work as efficiently as possible within the parameters of what we have to do. We will be getting the money to them as soon as possible.

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RADIO CANADA INTERNATIONAL

Mrs. Sheila Finestone (Mount Royal): Mr. Speaker, over \$10 million in cultural cuts were announced Friday allegedly to pay for our military exercise in the Persian Gulf.

On August 13, the CBC extended its international voice in Arabic to the Middle East, bringing messages from a western middle power.

My question for the President of the Treasury Board. At this time of crisis, with the citizens of Iraq and Kuwait isolated to Saddam Hussein's message, does the minister agree that Radio Canada International is vital to Canada's pursuing peace with these people, as well as a key voice to our Armed Forces? Is this not an important role for Canada and Canada's national interest?

Hon. Gerry Weiner (Secretary of State of Canada and Minister of State (Multiculturalism and Citizenship)): Mr. Speaker, CBC Radio-Canada is an independent society. It is an independent, arm's length body that functions in a completely independent fashion. I imagine it will make—

Some hon. members: Come on, give us an answer.

Mr. Weiner: I will, if you let me try. I imagine that when the expenditure reduction was applied in an equitable fashion, there was a sharing by all of us. The CBC will indeed determine what its priorities are and continue to offer the same high quality service it always has.

Mrs. Sheila Finestone (Mount Royal): Mr. Speaker, the President of the Treasury Board, had he cared to answer this question, knows perfectly well that he controls the funds.