

Oral Questions

[English]

INDUSTRY**LAY-OFFS AT PLYWOOD PLANT IN BURNABY, B.C.—
GOVERNMENT ACTION TO RECTIFY**

Mr. Svend J. Robinson (Burnaby): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Prime Minister, in the apparent absence of the Minister of Finance whose flippant answers to serious questions are rather useless.

In view of the fact that the largest plywood manufacturer in Canada, Weldwood Limited, has just announced the lay-off of 700 people, stating that the major reason for the lay-offs is the government's high interest policy which is having a disastrous effect on the Canadian housing market, can the Prime Minister advise the House what action he intends to take to get these people back to their jobs?

Right Hon. Joe Clark (Prime Minister): I shall certainly be prepared to have officials of my government meet with representatives of the company and of the workers to see if there is some action we can take which will get them back working productively.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Robinson (Burnaby): That is a rather unfortunate answer to a serious question.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Robinson (Burnaby): The manager of the plant said this morning the government's high interest rate policy was like a drug which cured the disease but killed the patient. What message can I take from the Prime Minister to the 700 workers and their families who are now without income as a direct result of this government's high interest rate policy?

● (1450)

Mr. Clark: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member can take back to the 700 workers, in whose name he presumes to speak, the fact that the Government of Canada and the Prime Minister of Canada are concerned about their situation. We are prepared to do what we can to try to help remedy their situation. I would suggest to the hon. member, and to the workers, through him, that they might find it more productive to get in touch with me directly.

Some hon. Members: Arrogance.

An hon. Member: No respect for Parliament.

* * *

INTERNATIONAL TRADE**PROPOSED COMMITTEE STUDY OF NUCLEAR ENERGY AND
REACTORS—DELAY CAUSED TO PROMOTIONAL EFFORTS**

Hon. Jean-Luc Pepin (Ottawa-Carleton): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of State for International Trade.

[Mr. Clark.]

In view of the announcement, still to be debated in the House, of the creation of a committee to look over the whole question of nuclear energy, including the export of nuclear reactors, I am concerned about the possible effects of that announcement and of the creation of that committee on the Canadian marketing efforts to sell nuclear reactors so important to our balance of trade.

Can the House be assured that the promotional efforts of the Canadian government are continuing now, and have instructions to that effect been given to various departments involved in it, such as the Department of Industry, Trade and Commerce, Atomic Energy of Canada Limited and the Department of External Affairs, particularly through the Secretary of State for External Affairs and trade commissioners, or are we going to witness another hiatus of the type we had on the Jerusalem issue?

Hon. Michael Wilson (Minister of State for International Trade): Mr. Speaker, the question of the export of nuclear equipment is very important to this country. I believe that in the Candu system we have a very important export product. Last week, I met with Mr. Donnelly, president of AECL, as well as the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources. That is the second meeting we have had in the last couple of weeks to discuss this very point. I would expect that this series of meetings will be continuing in order to develop broader trade packages which co-ordinate with our nuclear export activities and to follow through in the direction in which the member is suggesting we should go.

Mr. Pepin: Mr. Speaker, I gather that the minister has the support of all his colleagues in the cabinet for that effort. I should like to hear it very strongly and publicly.

In view of the importance of the sale of a Candu reactor to Japan, in particular—something which is very important for the future of the program—is the minister ready to go to Japan, possibly taking some of his colleagues, such as the Secretary of State for External Affairs, to promote the sale of a nuclear reactor to Japan as soon as the government of that country is formed?

Mr. Wilson: Mr. Speaker, Japan was one of the countries we discussed. I have also been in touch with our embassy. Embassy officials are keeping us in close touch with the way discussions are going in Japan. The hon. member must be aware of the fact that there are some differences of opinion in Japan as to which way to go. We are following this very closely, and if it is appropriate for me to visit Japan in furtherance of our export activities, I will do so.

SALE OF NUCLEAR REACTOR TO MEXICO

Mr. Maurice Dupras (Labelle): Mr. Speaker, my question is to the same minister. In answer to my colleague's question of October 24 with regard to trade with Mexico, the minister said two months ago that a committee had been set up. That was on October 24. What was the study carried out, when is the