

EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

PROTEST OF MR. BIBERSHTEIN AGAINST REFUSAL OF RUSSIA
TO ALLOW HIS WIFE AND DAUGHTER TO JOIN HIM—
GOVERNMENT ACTION

Mr. Perrin Beatty (Wellington-Grey-Dufferin-Waterloo): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Secretary of State for External Affairs which I indicated I would ask him. Is the minister aware of the case of Mr. Boris Bibershtein of Toronto who is entering the third week of a hunger strike to protest the refusal of the Russian government to allow his wife and eight year old daughter to join him in Canada, despite the fact that Mr. Bibershtein himself has been in Canada for 16 months? If the minister is aware of this case, if Mr. Bibershtein makes a formal request to the government to assist by interceding with the Russian authorities, is the minister prepared to help in any way he can?

Hon. Allan J. MacEachen (Secretary of State for External Affairs): Yes, Mr. Speaker, I am aware of this case. I heard the gentleman on the radio over the weekend, when he stated that at the present time he was not seeking assistance from the government of Canada. Certainly, we would be ready to assist because it is a humanitarian case involving family reunification.

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REGIONAL ECONOMIC EXPANSION

POSSIBILITY OF AMENDMENTS TO LEGISLATION

Mr. Robert C. Coates (Cumberland-Colchester North): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Minister of Regional Economic Expansion. I wonder whether the minister would inform the House, as a result of certain statements he made in the province of Quebec yesterday, whether it is his intention to produce new legislation to the House or amendments to present legislation relating to his department which will materially alter the course that his department is following at the moment?

[Translation]

Hon. Marcel Lessard (Minister of Regional Economic Expansion): Mr. Speaker, I did read a few moments ago the report on what I stated yesterday in Drummondville. There may be exaggeration over the terms I used. Nevertheless, there is no need at all to amend the legislation governing departmental activities so that the department itself be able to carry on the necessary studies and analyses, and to encourage and promote the industrial sector. Finally, that is what it has done so far to some extent, and this is exactly what most of my colleagues here in the House did, even those of the opposition, in respect of representations urging the department to be more aggressive and get better results, particularly in the Atlantic provinces. This is what I intend to do in reply to the suggestions of the House.

Oral Questions

● (1440)

[English]

NATIONAL DEFENCE

MINISTER'S VIEW OF UNITED STATES TRIDENT PROGRAM AS
FACTOR IN KEEPING PEACE

Mr. Hugh A. Anderson (Comox-Alberni): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of National Defence. Recently in British Columbia considerable controversy has developed regarding the Trident system of nuclear submarines having their refit and overhaul base at Bangor, Washington, since some British Columbians suggest this base would endanger residents in the lower mainland. Would the minister comment on the danger to the lower mainland and whether he feels the Trident program is a positive or negative factor in maintaining the balance of power between the United States of America and the U.S.S.R.

Hon. James Richardson (Minister of National Defence): Yes, Mr. Speaker; as I said in Vancouver I think the Trident base is part of the deterrent and part of the means of keeping a peaceful world. I wish the hon. member and others asking similar questions would ask them about some of the Soviet bases that are being built.

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[Translation]

CANADIAN NATIONAL RAILWAYS

LAY-OFF OF SEVENTEEN STATION MASTERS IN QUEBEC—
SUGGESTED RETIREMENT OR FREEZING OF POSITIONS

Mr. René Matte (Champlain): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Minister of Transport.

Considering the order of the Canadian Transport Commission allowing the Canadian National to lay off 17 station masters in the province of Quebec, and bearing in mind that some of them have more than 30 years of service to their credit and that it would be hard for them to get used to other positions, would the minister say if he would approach this problem from the human point of view and recommend either freezing the positions of these station masters or the possibility of retiring them on pension?

[English]

Hon. Otto E. Lang (Minister of Transport): Mr. Speaker, I do not have the specific facts of the situation. The various employee agreements normally protect by way of seniority persons in positions like this, but I would be glad to look at the specific cases.