

Oral Questions

International organizations and banking institutions are now involved in international negotiations. The best indications are that the Government of Argentina, which is now under a democratic régime, will take the necessary steps with a view to respecting fully all its international commitments. Indeed, the Argentinian Government did say that it knows full well that Argentina's real and long-term interests will best be served if it meets its international obligations.

[English]

ROLE OF EXPORT DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

Hon. Sinclair Stevens (York-Peel): Mr. Speaker, my supplementary question is directed to the Acting Secretary of State for External Affairs, who is in charge of the Export Development Corporation. Has any move been made in that Corporation, presumably at the Minister's direction, to require the Corporation to extend no further credit to the Argentine until matters are clarified? In answering the question, will the Minister indicate what is EDC's current exposure with respect to loans to the Argentine?

Hon. Gerald Regan (Minister for International Trade): Mr. Speaker, the nature of the confidence that I have in the management of the Export Development Corporation is such that it is customary to allow them, with their executive officers and board of directors, to determine the method and amounts of credit that, according to their formula, are appropriate for various countries. The question of lines of credit for Argentina or any other country would be determined in the way that they have always functioned. I have to say that at the present time Argentina is not regarded as a very good credit risk.

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LABOUR CONDITIONS

PLIGHT OF OLDER UNEMPLOYED WORKERS IN HAMILTON, ONT.

Mr. Ian Deans (Hamilton Mountain): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Finance. Due to a merger between Consolidated-Bathurst and MacMillan Bloedel, Consolidated-Bathurst closed its plant in Hamilton about a year ago. Of the 225 who lost their jobs, 75 were over the age of 50. They now have no job. They will not qualify for UIC benefits as at the end of next month. There does not appear to be anything under the labour adjustments program that will permit them to be compensated. They have no hope left. Is there anything for them within any of the Government programs presently in effect? Is there anything that the Government can offer that will guarantee that those older workers who lost their jobs through no fault of their own will not have to live in poverty until retirement age?

● (1440)

Hon. John Roberts (Minister of Employment and Immigration): Mr. Speaker, the hon. gentleman speaks in terms of a guarantee. No one can give absolute guarantees to workers

who have lost their occupations as a result of technological change or as a result of a recession. There are extensive programs for training and for retraining which are available, particularly to those who are receiving the benefit of unemployment insurance payments. Something close to \$500 million worth of funds is available for training throughout the country. Much of that is available to people who are in the condition described by the Hon. Member.

Mr. Deans: Mr. Speaker, I must say that that answer is simply not good enough. The fact of the matter is that the Minister knows full well that, for people over age 50, the opportunity to be retrained for any kind of meaningful employment is dramatically reduced as compared to other age groups. He also knows that in the Hamilton area very few employers are employing individuals who are currently unemployed.

RETRAINING PROGRAM INQUIRY

Mr. Ian Deans (Hamilton Mountain): Mr. Speaker, my question is quite simple. What about those people who have lost their jobs because of a merger, a decision made by Consolidated-Bathurst and MacMillan Bloedel, and who are now at an age when retraining is virtually impossible and finding another job is almost equally impossible? What kind of program can the Minister now offer to those people to guarantee them that between now and the time they are able to retire legitimately, they will have some kind of income to keep themselves and their families from starvation?

Hon. John Roberts (Minister of Employment and Immigration): Mr. Speaker, the hon. gentleman has asked an impossible and obviously flawed question. If he makes the assumption that it is not possible for those people to have jobs, and if he makes the assumption that it is not possible for them to receive training, then obviously it will not be possible to respond to the situation in which they find themselves. He has stacked his question in such a way so as to ensure that there is no possible answer that can be given to it. I am not nearly as pessimistic as he seems to be about the possibility of people of this age finding job opportunities and retraining programs to assist them.

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EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

SRI LANKA—INTERNAL CONFLICT

Mr. Jesse P. Flis (Parkdale-High Park): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Secretary of State for External Affairs, but in his absence I would like to direct it to the Minister of External Relations. In July of last year it was reported that hundreds of Tamils were killed and thousands were left homeless in Sri Lanka because of conflicts between government troops and Tamils who were demanding independence for their northern province.