

Point of Order—Mr. Mazankowski

● (1200)

[Translation]

Hon. Marcel Masse (Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources): Mr. Speaker, because of differences in the tax structure of our two countries—I am referring both to the federal governments and to the provinces or states—plus the matter of marketing structures in the various regions, where outlets may be more or less numerous, plus the matter of how far people are from the refineries and the pipelines, so because of all these factors, the price of gas differs from region to region inside Canada and from one country to another on the North American continent, and I am referring to the United States and Canada.

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RAILWAYS

LAY-OFFS AT CN MAINTENANCE SHOPS

Mr. Jacques Guilbault (Saint-Jacques): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Transport. I would like to remind him that in addition to the 650 maintenance employees at the CN workshops in Moncton who have been put out of work, there are 2,000 at the workshops at Pointe-Saint-Charles in Montreal whose jobs are at stake. I would also like to remind him that history tells us about a man called Pontius Pilate who decided to wash his hands—

Since the Minister claims that CN made this decision on its own, is he prepared to table here in the House CN's internal study on the maintenance of rolling stock?

[English]

Hon. John C. Crosbie (Minister of Transport): Mr. Speaker, the hon. gentleman is slow in exhibiting concern. Over 7,000 CN employees were laid off during the term of the last Liberal administration.

With respect to Pointe-Saint-Charles, there are no plans of which I know for any lay-offs there, though there may be temporary lay-offs from time to time. CN plans to utilize that facility and to continue utilizing it to do all the kinds of work that it can do with outside third parties. That is the plan for it, and CN has no reason to doubt that it will be a successful plan. There is no plan to close that facility, and CN and we will make every effort to ensure that it continues in full production in the coming years.

[Translation]

REQUEST THAT STUDY BE TABLED

Mr. Jacques Guilbault (Saint-Jacques): Mr. Speaker, I am delighted with the Minister's good intentions and his assurances that the workers at Pointe-Saint-Charles do not have to worry. However, I am going to ask him to answer my question, since he failed to do so.

Is the Minister prepared to table before all Canadians the study by CN on maintenance of railway cars and locomotives, so the Canadian public can see for itself whether there is any real justification for laying people off—in Moncton that is already the case, and it may happen in Pointe-Saint-Charles—because I am not entirely convinced by the assurances that I have just been given?

[English]

Hon. John C. Crosbie (Minister of Transport): Mr. Speaker, I cannot table in the House confidential reports prepared by CN or any of our other Crown corporations in connection with their work, reports that their competitors would dearly love to see, including U.S. railways and others. The suggestion is jejune and juvenile.

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POINT OF ORDER

QUESTION PERIOD—ACCEPTABLE TENOR

Hon. Don Mazankowski (Deputy Prime Minister and President of the Privy Council): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order and I hope that you will find it consistent with the spirit of goodwill and generosity on which you had elaborated earlier, particularly within the spirit of the desire on the part of, I believe, all Members to set a new tone in the House of Commons consistent with the rules, traditions and practices of parliamentary procedure.

I simply want to draw to your attention, Mr. Speaker, the type of questions that were put by the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Turner), the Hon. Member for York South—Weston (Mr. Nunziata) and the Hon. Member for Saint-Jacques (Mr. Guilbault). They were, I believe, inconsistent with the standard rules of procedure as outlined in Beauchesne's Fifth Edition. I would draw your attention, Mr. Speaker, to Citation 359 which reads as follows:

“(1) It must be a question, not an expression of an opinion, representation, argumentation, nor debate.

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Mazankowski: That is fine. Furthermore, Mr. Speaker, the questions—

Ms. Copps: The answer must not be a lie.

Mr. Mazankowski: Mr. Speaker, furthermore the question must be brief. Second, a supplementary question should need no preamble.

I merely draw these points to your attention, Sir, because I think it would be in our interest to try to conduct ourselves consistent with the rules of parliamentary practice as outlined in Beauchesne's Fifth Edition.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!