

Oral Questions

to help the Lebanese people, who are caught in a war that is being waged at their expense?

[English]

Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Minister of Employment and Immigration): Madam Speaker, as the hon. member will recognize, the situation in Lebanon is still very confused as a result of the tragic events of the past two weeks. Therefore, no decision has been made by the U.N. or other agencies concerning refugees. However, in the meantime the government has taken a decision to allow the approximately 1,000 visitors of Lebanese origin presently in Canada to apply to stay here for a full year, with the minister's permit to work during that period of time. After the year obviously we will review their situation. This is comparable to what we did for the Polish refugees.

Similarly we will allow Canadians of Lebanese origin to sponsor family members in Lebanon, who can come here at the same time under relaxed criteria, and we will not require anyone whose visa has expired during that period of time to return to Lebanon during the serious period of crisis. Those are the measures we have taken during this period, Madam Speaker, and when other decisions are made by the international community relating to a larger refugee movement, I will announce them in the House.

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[Translation]

TRADE

FOOTWEAR INDUSTRY—PROTECTION OF JOBS IN QUEBEC AND ONTARIO—INQUIRY WHETHER MEASURES WILL BE TAKEN TO CORRECT SITUATION

Mr. Dan Heap (Spadina): Madam Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of State for International Trade. Whereas government import policies are hurting the footwear industry and workers in Quebec and Ontario are unemployed because there are no reasonable quotas on leather footwear, I want to ask the minister whether he intends to take prompt action to protect these Canadian workers.

[English]

Hon. Ed Lumley (Minister of State (International Trade)): Madam Speaker, as I have said three or four times, because of representations made by members on both sides of the House, as well as by all segments of the industry, the government is reconsidering its position of last November, and we will announce our decision in the last week of June or the first week of July.

TIMING OF ANNOUNCEMENT

Mr. Dan Heap (Spadina): Madam Speaker, given that it was March 4 when it was first promised there would be an answer probably within a month, and that the minister announced on May 20 that he hoped to have an answer within a week, can the minister undertake to give an answer within

this month as to whether he will restore the quotas and give the industry a chance to regain the 7,000 jobs lost and protect the other 13,000 jobs? Will he answer that this month considering that there have now been six months of delay since the original wrong decision?

Hon. Ed Lumley (Minister of State (International Trade)): Madam Speaker, I hope the hon. member recognizes that exports as a percentage of Canada's gross national product are one of the highest of any country in the world. Therefore, any protectionist action we take could have some adverse effects on our future trade and job creation. Thus, it is a very complex decision and not one that should be made overnight. I have already indicated, four or five times, that we will make a decision in the last week of June or first week of July.

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CANADIAN NATIONAL RAILWAYS**ANNOUNCEMENT OF LAY-OFFS**

Mr. Bob Corbett (Fundy-Royal): Madam Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Transport. CNCP Telecommunications have just announced they are pulling out of New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island; the result is canned jobs. The Water Quality Control Branch in Moncton has announced its relocation; more canned jobs in New Brunswick. Mitel has been delayed for months; the result is canned aspirations. The strangulation by the minister of VIA Rail and of the Atlantic Limited has resulted in dozens of canned jobs. Now CN says it will lay off thousands of workers across the nation, including hundreds in Moncton. Will the minister assure those very concerned workers that indeed they will be rehired, that the lay-offs are only temporary, and will he advise them when they will be rehired?

Hon. Jean-Luc Pepin (Minister of Transport): Madam Speaker, I understand the lay-offs are until October 15, if my memory serves me well. That is what CN is saying, so obviously that is what will happen. On the question as a whole, I think my hon. friend would not like to accept the principle that CN should isolate itself from the rest of the economy. There is a reduction in traffic, so CN feels it has to adjust to that. If it did not, the future of CN might be compromised, and obviously the government would be asked to pay for the cost of maintaining these people in the CN labour force.

Mr. Corbett: Madam Speaker, we have seen all kinds of situations where this government has made different work projects available to different parts of the country where it might be more favourable to the government. It is hard to get at these fellows all at once because they are all in it together.

Madam Speaker: Order. Hon. members would help the Chair if they refrained from commenting on the answers, and instead just proceeded to their questions.