

Proceedings on Adjournment Motion

[Translation]

Mr. Laprise: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. On March 3 last, I asked the future minister of manpower (Mr. Marchand) since the shortage of skilled labour is one of the main reasons for the closing down of a gold mine in the Timmins area, this month if he could tell the House whether he intended to direct our unemployed toward the mining industry.

It has been announced also that another mine in the Yukon, will be closing down; two others have announced their closing down in a few months, for the same reasons.

And it is a fact, Mr. Speaker, that for some months now we have seen in the newspapers job offers for qualified men in our mines, tradesmen, electricians, plumbers, machinists, drillers, dynamiters, and so on. We need qualified men in our mines.

The Department of Citizenship and Immigration thought it had found a solution to that problem by attracting experienced miners to Canada. But this does not seem to satisfy our mining industries, for mining methods here are different from European methods. So, as the immigrants have no experience in our mines, they do not satisfy the needs of our mining operators.

I should like to ask the future Minister of Manpower to direct to the mining industry the unemployed and the young people who want to become acquainted with mining operations, mining work.

The federal government could help the provinces open mining schools so as to allow people displaced by automation or young Canadians who enter the labour market to gain elementary knowledge of our Canadian mining methods.

In closing, I should like to point out to the minister that gold mines, because their income is lower than others, are the first to suffer from this shortage of skilled workers.

The minister should take into consideration the suggestions I made to him tonight, in order to enable our young and our unemployed to take the necessary courses to meet the manpower demands of the mining industry.

Hon. Jean Marchand (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration): Mr. Speaker, I believe the suggestion which has been made is a very useful one. It says that we should try to train the men to fill in the available jobs in mines, and in the industries in general as well.

[Mr. Speaker.]

It is one of the projects we hope to be able to put into operation by next July 1, with higher allowances, we can probably better adjust from the professional point of view, the qualifications of our workers to the needs of the market.

There is only one thing that I would like to point out to the hon. member for Chapleau (Mr. Laprise). Whatever the quality of our vocational training, whatever efforts we make to prepare our people, either for working in mines or at other trades, labour conditions in those mines or trades must be attractive enough so that workers will be interested.

I know that, in some businesses and mining operations, even if we import labour, even skilled labour, the workers will not stay because of the relatively low level of income. It means that when a high level of employment exists, as is the case in some regions of Canada right now, it is absolutely impossible to convince the workers, and I think they are right, to stay in jobs which do not pay enough.

Of course, gold mines are a special case since their operations are subsidized. But it remains that one of the problems in those operations is precisely that either the labour conditions are a little too hard, or the level of income is not enough to attract and hold Canadian workers.

There is one thing I am not ready to do as Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, and that is to allow labour to be imported so that it will be forced, directly or indirectly, to accept jobs which do not pay enough. It has happened that some businesses, in order to secure cheap labour, have loaned money to immigrants, paid their trip and told them that they will not have to repay their fare if they work for the business for two, three or four years. In my opinion, this is slavery, and I do not think that such a situation should be accepted in Canada.

The case presented to us by the hon. member for Chapleau is one which we may try to deal with to a certain extent through our rehabilitation and reclassification systems, but at the same time working conditions and wages must be on a level allowing these businesses to compete with others in the labour market.