

Oral Questions

introducing last week a bill that included literally 100 amendments to the Criminal Code to improve and modernize it.

The hon. member raises the question of capital punishment. We ran for election last year on a very specific platform in justice matters. This government, instead of looking at polls as suggested by the hon. member, is concentrating on fulfilling those commitments.

Mr. Jack Ramsay (Crowfoot): Mr. Speaker, the former government that refused to listen to the people is now sitting with two people in behind us. I suggest that he should be listening to the people.

My supplementary question is this. In light of the shooting death of Toronto police constable, Todd Baylis, and in view of the consistent public demand for the return of capital punishment, would the minister be willing to support a binding referendum on capital punishment, tying it in with the next federal election to eliminate the cost?

• (1440)

Hon. Allan Rock (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada): Mr. Speaker, let me say two things. First of all we were elected last year on a platform which did not include the restoration of capital punishment.

As recently as seven years ago the House debated capital punishment at length and on a free vote decided it should not be restored. That is the first observation.

Second, the hon. member speaks of consistency. I would ask him to be consistent. He has referred to the tragic case of last Thursday in which a police officer was shot to death. Preliminary indications are that the weapon used in that murder was a hand gun that was stolen from someone who owned it lawfully and had it registered. Now if that is not further indication of the need for gun control, I would like to hear what is.

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[Translation]

PROGRAM FOR OLDER WORKER ADJUSTMENT

Mr. Michel Daviault (Ahuntsic): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Human Resources Development. On June 3, the House was presented with a private member's bill to modify the program for older worker adjustment. This bill was intended to make companies that lay off more than 20 workers eligible, thus ending the discrimination against Montreal textile, clothing and retail workers in particular.

Can the Minister of Human Resources Development tell us why his department refuses to modify POWA to benefit Montreal workers, when he presented a bill extending eligibility for fishery workers? What justifies this double standard?

[English]

Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Minister of Human Resources Development and Minister of Western Economic Diversification): Mr. Speaker, one thing of which the hon. member should be aware is that the specific program for older workers is a joint federal-provincial program run by both levels of government.

Any changes we would want to contemplate would have to be done in close consultation and co-operation with the provinces. It certainly would be one of the major agenda items we would pursue during our discussion of social security reform.

[Translation]

Mr. Michel Daviault (Ahuntsic): Mr. Speaker, can the minister tell us if he agrees with his colleague, the member for Saint-Léonard and government whip, that POWA should be universal and have no eligibility criteria for laid off workers?

[English]

Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Minister of Human Resources Development and Minister of Western Economic Diversification): Mr. Speaker, as the hon. member points out, the private member's comments came from our chief whip. I have learned over my 22 years of parliamentary experience never to disagree with the chief whip.

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GREAT LAKES SPORT FISHERY

Mr. Roger Gallaway (Sarnia—Lambton): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans.

The fishing industry on the Great Lakes is used by four million anglers, generates \$2 billion to \$4 billion annually and supports some 75,000 full time jobs.

Now there is evidence to suggest that the sea lamprey eel is making a strong comeback in the Great Lakes. What is being done by the government to address this problem before it gets totally out of hand?

Hon. Brian Tobin (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is right. The Great Lakes sport fishery is a multibillion dollar industry and it ought to be acknowledged by the Government of Canada when it makes policies in fisheries and oceans.

For that reason I am pleased to announce on behalf of the government today a 33 per cent increase in our financial commitment to preserving this multibillion dollar industry.

The control program comes under a joint U.S.-Canada commission. Recently I had discussions with the U.S. ambassador to discuss this matter, among others, and I am confident that the United States will announce a similar increase on their side as well.