

Oral Questions

Further to the question by the Bloc on June 1, which has yet to be answered, will the Minister of Labour once and for all correct the federal government's error in connection with the Singer employees?

• (1455)

[English]

Mr. Maurizio Bevilacqua (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Human Resources Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will look into the matter and report to the hon. member as soon as possible.

[Translation]

Mr. Jean H. Leroux (Shefford, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the question was asked over three weeks ago.

My supplementary is also for the Minister of Labour, who was elected to answer questions in this House. How can the Minister of Labour, by refusing to intervene quickly in the matter, allow herself to be an accomplice in this injustice to the former employees of Singer, whose average age is 80 and who are hoping to finally achieve justice after so many years of struggle?

[English]

Mr. Maurizio Bevilacqua (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Human Resources Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I think it is extremely irresponsible on the part of the hon. member to use occasions like this to play cheap politics.

If the hon. member would review the responsibilities of the Minister of Human Resources Development he would find it is the responsibility of that minister. To attack the Minister of Labour, and I know exactly where you are coming from on this issue—

The Speaker: I ask hon. members to please address the Chair.

* * *

FAMILY INCOME

Mr. Herb Grubel (Capilano—Howe Sound, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, Canadian families are right; Statistics Canada has made it official. Family incomes after taxes have fallen 6.5 per cent in real terms since 1989; 2.1 per cent in the last year surveyed. Canadians are fed up with the performance of the economy and rightly blame the federal government.

Will the minister accept the blame for the decline in family income and change the policies responsible?

Hon. Douglas Peters (Secretary of State (International Financial Institutions), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his question.

The statistics he refers to ended in 1993. There was an election that year and since that time there have been some half million new

jobs created in the country. The statistics for 1994, the first year of our mandate, will show a substantial rise in family incomes in Canada.

Mr. Herb Grubel (Capilano—Howe Sound, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, since 1981 tax freedom day, the day when people's annual incomes go into their pockets, has advanced 73 days. The Fraser Institute announced that this year it is on July 5. The tragedy is that the ever higher taxes we all pay do not get us more services, they pay interest on our staggering debt.

When will the government close the bottomless hole for our tax dollars by cutting the debt and getting Canadian families once more to enjoy increases in after tax incomes as they had for decades before the deficit became out of control?

Hon. Douglas Peters (Secretary of State (International Financial Institutions), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I really appreciate that question because that is exactly what the government is doing. It is reducing the deficit, bringing it to 3 per cent of GDP in the third year of our mandate, on the way to a balanced budget. That means a falling debtload and lower taxes will follow when the time comes.

* * *

CUBA

Hon. Audrey McLaughlin (Yukon, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the acting Prime Minister.

Canada has maintained broken diplomatic relations with Cuba for 50 years and has established very important trade and investment links. In contrast, the United States has maintained an inhumane embargo that has had disastrous implications for the people of Cuba.

Today American politicians are once again threatening Canadian companies with trade links to Cuba with blacklisting. I ask the acting Prime Minister if he can tell this House whether the Prime Minister will be raising this issue at the G-7 meeting this week and condemning the U.S. blockade of Cuba and condemning the bullying of Canadians and Canadian business by the United States.

• (1500)

Mr. Mac Harb (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister for International Trade, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there are two parts to this question.

One part deals with the Helms bill. The minister and the government are on the record as being opposed to this bill. We are encouraged that the U.S. administration so far has clearly indicated that they also have some concerns about that piece of legislation.

On the second part of the hon. member's question, which deals with action that might be taken against Canadian companies doing business in Cuba, we have not received anything officially on this matter. As soon as we receive anything we will take appropriate action in the interest of Canadians and Canadian businesses.