

Oral Questions

● (1450)

A variety of proposals has been made and actions have been taken in a continuing way over the past three years. For instance, I recommend to the Hon. Member the forest strategy paper which was published two years ago and the proposals for agreements on reforestation which presented to provincial Governments last September. We are in the process of negotiating reforestation agreements with each of the Provinces. We signed one with Nova Scotia. One is ready to be signed with Prince Edward Island. We are anxious to move ahead on signing one with New Brunswick. He will be aware of recent actions which we had taken in New Brunswick for the strengthening of the Maritime Forest Centre, including the federal Government's research centre as a key part of it.

A great deal of action is taking place. Objectives have been established and proposals for implementation have been presented. Programs are under way in every major area of deficiency which we described three years ago in the preparatory work for that action.

It is not a question of procrastination. An enormous amount of work is being done, and is generally being done with the approbation of Hon. Members on all sides of the House. I would like to reflect a little on exactly what are the purposes of such a committee inquiry to see whether this is proper timing in relation to that, or whether some other timing would be more appropriate.

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SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY**NABU CORPORATION LAY-OFFS—GOVERNMENT POSITION**

Mr. Ian Waddell (Vancouver-Kingsway): Madam Speaker, my question is directed to the minister of State for Economic Development. I want to return to the Nabu question, because technological change is coming on more rapidly than all of us really thought. I would like to refer to a news story, and then ask the Minister a question. In part the article reads:

—Nabu announced it was laying off more than half its 225 manufacturing employees and in future would locate as much of its manufacturing operations as possible in low-wage countries.

With the Minister's well known Pollyanna views about high technological change, and considering that the Government still has an obligation to Nabu workers, and that this is a company to which it indirectly gave \$125 million, would the Minister confirm that the Government obtained from Nabu job security and job guarantees for those workers in return for giving the company so much money?

Hon. Donald J. Johnston (Minister of State for Economic Development and Minister of State for Science and Technology): Madam Speaker, of course the issue of Nabu is well known going back to the transaction undertaken with the Government of Canada. I am not sure what were the specific terms and conditions of that agreement.

With respect to the specific concerns for unemployed workers, the Government has those same concerns for any company which rationalizes its processes in the manner that we see happening at Nabu. The Hon. Member is well aware of the kinds of steps which have been taken in all sectors to make provision in such circumstances. The same programs will apply in this case. Certainly I will look into the issue of Nabu, given the historical relationship of the company with the Government because of the transaction to which reference was made earlier during Question Period.

Mr. Waddell: The Minister knows that he has in his back pocket a departmental study which shows that technology will not create enough jobs to replace those that evaporate, unless we change the way technological development is happening in Canada.

REQUEST THAT COMMITTEE CONSIDER TECHNOLOGICAL CHANGE

Mr. Ian Waddell (Vancouver-Kingsway): Madam Speaker, would the minister agree that the jobs in this industry are very volatile? We can look at the example of Mitel yesterday and its loss of a contract.

Also, would the minister agree with the views which were expressed a few years ago by the late distinguished Senator Lamontagne, that we require a permanent committee of the House to study technological change and that we should get going on that committee? Why is the Government dragging its heels on this important matter when things are happening all around it affecting Canadian workers who are losing out as a result of technological change?

Hon. Donald J. Johnston (Minister of State for Economic Development and Minister of State for Science and Technology): Madam Speaker, certainly the Government is not dragging its heels on this issue. I do not think the striking of a standing committee will solve the kinds of problem the Hon. Member raised, although I would agree, as I said in hearings before the Standing Committee on Miscellaneous Estimates, that indeed such a committee could be valuable in terms of making Canadians aware of the problems and also the opportunities which will arise.

To return to the so-called "study", it was not a study. I have made that point before. It was a document designed to provoke discussing among my colleagues. Obviously the leaking of that document has provoked a good deal of discussion. That is very healthy. The Hon. Member might have noted the study by Informetrica which was published last week that, in turn, with respect to its economic models contradicted the statistics that were put forward and indeed took the view that many more jobs will be created by virtue of these new technologies than there will be jobs lost.

I am not suggesting that anyone knows the answer to this question, but to suggest that we are dragging our heels, when there are studies in almost every Department, when we are meeting with all interested groups, and when the Minister of