

Supply

Why is the Minister of Transport manipulating the figures and withholding other crucial statistics?

Mr. Speaker: That is an allegation and is just not appropriate.

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SMALL BUSINESS

Mr. Bill Attewell (Markham—Whitchurch—Stouffville): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of State for Small Businesses and Tourism.

I recently met with Mr. Alvin Starr who is a partner in a small business in Markham that specializes in software development for the medical and defence industries. He is having great difficulty trying to do business with the Government of Canada.

As the minister knows, the United States have a set-aside program whereby a specific percentage of business is set aside specifically for small business. Is the minister of state for small business thinking seriously about such a program, which is so effective in the U.S.?

Hon. Tom Hockin (Minister of State (Small Businesses and Tourism)): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my hon. friend for his thoughtful question. We do not have a small business set-aside program and, in fact, I would not be in favour of it as it presently stands. In the United States it develops more into a ceiling than a floor.

Sixty-one per cent of all procurements through DSS go to small business—over 85,000 of them—plus the large contractors are subcontracting all the time to smaller businesses.

We also have an open bidding system. We have the Electronic Procurement Opportunities Board. The Procurement Review Board is opening up procurement to small business, and effective tomorrow we will have a new policy on Canadian content to help small businesses, but it will not be the same as the small business set-aside program in the U.S.

Mr. Speaker: I want to say to the hon. member for Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca that I apologize for a mix-up. Perhaps the hon. member would like to put one question.

TRADE

Mr. David Barrett (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca): Mr. Speaker, with some difficulty I will incorporate my question and my supplementary into one question and I will give my own answer if the minister cannot answer.

Yesterday the government produced a pamphlet entitled *Negotiations for a North American Free Trade Agreement*. On the bottom part of the pamphlet it says: "But how can we compete with lower Mexican wage rates?" and then it goes on to say: "Wages often represent only a relatively small percentage of the total cost of production".

I would ask the minister of trade this question. Does he have any specific studies, sector by sector, on the manufacturing production in this country that would prove that wages are not a factor? For example, the only study known on auto parts manufacturing shows—

Some hon. members: Order, order.

Mr. Barrett: Mr. Speaker, perhaps I will put my question tomorrow.

Mr. Speaker: Perhaps that would be the best thing.

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PRESENCE IN GALLERY

Mr. Speaker: I wish to draw to the members' attention the presence in the gallery of the Hon. John Penner, Minister of Energy and Mines from the Province of Saskatchewan.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

SUPPLY

ALLOTTED DAY, S. O. 81—WOMEN'S RIGHTS

The House resumed consideration of the motion of Ms. Clancy (p. 9052).