

Oral Questions

Why would the government give a gift to its friends and sacrifice the workers?

Hon. Otto Jelinek (Minister of National Revenue): Mr. Speaker, I do not know how I can make myself any clearer than to say that all of the elements of the pensions and all of the back-wages of the employees have been satisfied. There were no gifts by this government, by Revenue Canada or any other department, to the principals of Route Canada.

In fact, as the hon. member knows, the situation is that some of the \$200,000 is still outstanding. It is guaranteed by the agent. At the end of the day we could and would assess the directors under the directors' liability provisions, should those provisions be required. At this point in time we do not expect that to be the case.

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INDUSTRY, SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

Mr. Howard McCurdy (Windsor—St. Clair): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Industry, Science and Technology. As he knows, NRC has announced some considerable restructuring today with the creation of five new research institutes.

Gerhard Herzberg, the NRC's only Nobel laureate, says he does not know what it all means. We know what it means. It means that cutbacks have occasioned the need to function within restricted resources, as they keep telling us.

How many sections and projects such as medical engineering are to be lost? How many more scientists are to be laid off, and how many important, significant researchers of Canada are going to flee the country because they have lost their jobs because this government has cut back at NRC?

Hon. Benoît Bouchard (Minister of Industry, Science and Technology): Mr. Speaker, I will indeed not be as pessimistic as my friend is, but that is something that we are used to seeing on the other side.

Those institutes which will be created at the NRC today are for micro-structural sciences, national measurement standards, environmental chemistry, molecular sciences and information technology. All those institutes will reinforce the capacity we have to do

research. It is based on the result of an arduous evaluation process involving the staff and experts from industry and the scientific community.

I believe that the NRC decision is a good decision. It will reinforce what my friend reproached the government for many times, a basic research sector. I believe it is good for NRC and it is good for Canada.

Mr. Howard McCurdy (Windsor—St. Clair): Mr. Speaker, that is all very nice. There may be some merit in these changes, but my question to the minister was how many scientists are going to lose their jobs, how many scientists are going to leave the country.

There has been in process the development of a five-year plan at NRC. When will that plan be available? Will the minister allow the House Standing Committee on Industry, Science and Technology to have some input into evaluating that five-year plan before government chops it up and fires some more scientists?

• (1500)

[Translation]

Hon. Benoît Bouchard (Minister of Industry, Science and Technology): Mr. Speaker, first of all, in reply to the question about employment or staff cuts further to the restructuring announced by the National Research Council: they are completely out of the question. No staff cuts are involved.

Secondly, as for the NRC's five-year plan, I think it will be tabled when the science minister sees fit to do so. The minister will carry out the required consultations to the extent that he thinks advisable, Mr. Speaker.

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TRADE

Mr. Jean-Guy Guilbault (Drummond): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister for International Trade. One of the Canadian negotiators of the Canada—U.S. Free Trade Agreement, Michael Hart, recently predicted that Canada would eventually conclude a trilateral free trade agreement with the United States and Mexico. Moreover, he came out with a positive report on it yesterday. He also maintains that without a trilateral agreement, the benefits that Canada derives from its free trade agreement with the United States will disappear as the Americans look south.