

Oral Questions

● (1125)

PRIME MINISTER'S POSITION

Hon. Edward Broadbent (Oshawa): Mr. Speaker, to use the Minister's own word, the "system" permits the Prime Minister of Canada in correspondence with the President of the United States to express Canadian concerns. It is then up to the President of the United States to take the appropriate steps.

I wish to return to the central concern which is why the Prime Minister did not act on behalf of Canadian workers. Would the Minister tell us why the Prime Minister, who wrote complaining about the unfortunate political impact a previous decision had on him, did not say in the letter: "Mr. Reagan, 300,000 Canadian workers can be affected by this decision. Will you take appropriate steps within your political system to protect those jobs?"

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. This is now too long.

Right Hon. Joe Clark (Secretary of State for External Affairs): Mr. Speaker, this is of course a repetition of questions that were asked yesterday.

Mr. Broadbent: But we have a decision today.

Mr. Clark (Yellowhead): The answer is the same now as it was yesterday. The answer is that the Government of Canada has used every appropriate means to make Canada's political concerns known, but we did not want to take an action that would have had the effect of being a political intervention in this quasi-judicial process, an intervention that might have backfired on Canada in a way that would have prejudiced the case of the workers in British Columbia. The Leader of the New Democratic Party may be interested in playing that kind of political game with the workers of British Columbia. We want to protect their interests, not put them at risk.

[Translation]

REQUEST FOR EXPLANATION FOR OMISSION OF PARTICULAR SECTOR FROM LETTER TO UNITED STATES PRESIDENT

Hon. Edward Broadbent (Oshawa): Mr. Speaker, surely the Minister can understand that if he wanted to, the Prime Minister of Canada could write a letter to the President in the interest of Canadians. He has every right to.

The Minister is certainly aware that in the province of Quebec, this industry which employs 21,000 workers is selling 60 per cent of its production to the United States. Why has he failed to mention this industry in his letter to the President?

[English]

Right Hon. Joe Clark (Secretary of State for External Affairs): Mr. Speaker, one answer is that he was writing a letter, not an encyclopaedia.

[Translation]

But the other reply is to the effect that the Canadian Government has indicated to the United States on many

occasions the political concern and interests involved here, as well as the interests of Canadian workers affected here.

The problem is that we are faced with a quasi-judiciary system in the United States. If the Government of Canada had taken a position which could be interpreted as an interference in this system, this could have resulted in major problems for the workers in Quebec, British Columbia, and the rest of Canada. That is a fact, and that is the reason why we acted as we did.

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[English]

CANADIAN JOBS STRATEGY

SIGNING OF EMPLOYMENT TRAINING AGREEMENTS WITH PROVINCES

Hon. Warren Allmand (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine East): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Employment and Immigration. For almost a year now the provinces have opposed her training proposals because they offer less money and they are too bureaucratic. Only three provinces have signed agreements. Considering the recent memo of her Deputy Minister, why is the Government now withholding job-creation funds using the unemployed as hostages to pressure the provinces to sign unacceptable training agreements? Is this an example of the new federalism put forward by the Government?

Hon. Flora MacDonald (Minister of Employment and Immigration): Mr. Speaker, training agreements have already been signed with the Province of Ontario, the Province of British Columbia, and the Province of Newfoundland. An agreement will be signed next week with the Province of Prince Edward Island. Negotiations are well under way with other provinces.

It is true, of course, that tough negotiating is going on because the provinces would like more power and more authority. I am working out negotiations with them so that I may have the fairest possible programs from the federal Government's point of view.

Mr. Allmand: Mr. Speaker, the Minister did not answer the question.

[Translation]

FUNDS FOR JOB CREATION—QUEBEC—GOVERNMENT POSITION

Hon. Warren Allman (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine East): Mr. Speaker, what does the Minister make of opposition in Quebec, where Ministers Ryan and Paradis continue to oppose the federal policy on manpower training because of cutbacks totalling \$54 million?

Does the Minister intend to deny Quebec access to job creation funds as she does in the case of New Brunswick?