

Oral Questions

policy. Therefore I think his statement has all the more authority when he says that the economy has never been in better shape in the last 15 years.

I might advise my friend that I did not take a totally negative attitude to his question the other day. On the contrary, I indicated the large contribution the federal Government had brought to Prince Edward Island in helping that province reduce its dependence on oil in particular, especially in the area of conservation of energy generally, through home insulation, et cetera. Programs were specifically tailored for situations like that of Prince Edward Island.

As far as the report the Hon. Member has referred to is concerned, I will read it with interest, but I can tell him that the studies the Department of Energy had made at that time, in consultation with the Governments of New Brunswick and P.E.I., seem to indicate that the cost of not using the Lepreau electricity was much higher than if it had been used.

ENERGY SUBSIDY

Mr. Tom McMillan (Hillsborough): Mr. Speaker, the Minister will recognize that, while conservation is important, it is just the tip of the iceberg as far as Prince Edward Island's energy problem is concerned. Therefore, does he at least recognize that exorbitantly high electrical costs on the Island constitute the biggest obstacle to that province ever achieving any degree of economic self-sufficiency? If so, would he be prepared to recommend to the new Liberal Prime Minister after the weekend that he examine the idea of a P.E.I. energy subsidy with an open mind so that the Island can become more industrially competitive and ultimately less dependent on transfer payments both to individuals and to the Government?

Hon. Marc Lalonde (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, I do not agree with the analysis of the Hon. Member. I can only remind him that the federal Government paid \$18 million, I believe, for an electrical transmission cable to Prince Edward Island. That is a significant subsidy to help reduce the cost of electricity to the people of Prince Edward Island.

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INDUSTRY

LAY-OFFS AT WOODS INCORPORATED, TORONTO

Ms. Lynn McDonald (Broadview-Greenwood): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Supply and Services concerning another plant closing, Woods Incorporated, in my constituency. Some 140 production workers have been laid off, and the question is whether it is temporary or permanent. The Minister will know the company because it bid successfully on a number of contracts before, and has recently bid on a major contract. Can the Minister hold out any hope for those workers who have been laid off that there will be production jobs in September and that they will be getting back to work?

● (1450)

[Translation]

Hon. Charles Lapointe (Minister of Supply and Services): Mr. Speaker, I wish to thank the Hon. Member for her question and for giving me advance notice of the question.

I discussed with the Hon. Member the offer made by the company in her riding. The information I was able to obtain was as follows: The contract will be awarded in the first half of July. At the present time, the Department is checking the quality of certain materials for these emergency bags which will be used by the Armed Forces. Today I am not in a position to say who will or will not get the contract, but I realize that the workers in the company mentioned by the Hon. Member are in a difficult situation. I hope, if the company's price and product is the best one being offered, that it will get the contract.

[English]

SLEEPING BAG CONTRACT

Ms. Lynn McDonald (Broadview-Greenwood): Mr. Speaker, my supplementary question is for the same Minister, or perhaps for the Minister of National Defence. It is with regard to a similar contract. Timing seems to be very important in this situation. For this company to survive and these jobs to continue, there must be some production in the fall. Yet there have been a number of delays on another major contract of around \$1 million for sleeping bags for the Armed Forces. Can we have an understanding as to when this contract will be out for bids? The company has been told week after week that it is imminent, yet there has not been any action. I trust both the Ministers are aware that the livelihood of a community, and of real people who are suffering, is at stake.

Hon. J.-J. Blais (Minister of National Defence): Mr. Speaker, I would be pleased to look into the representations of the Hon. Member. I am not familiar with the particular contract she is speaking of, nor the particular requirement. I will inquire and provide her with as much information as I possibly can.

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EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

POLAND—EXIT VISAS SOUGHT FOR FAMILY REUNIFICATIONS

Hon. David Crombie (Rosedale): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Secretary of State for External Affairs. The question concerns the very brave struggle of the hunger strikers in front of the Polish consulate in Toronto. I want to associate myself with the question raised earlier by the Member for Parkdale-High Park urging the Government to press the Polish authorities to grant exit visas to the families of those people who are now in their twenty-fourth day of hunger strike.

In order to put more pressure on the Polish authorities, would the Government contact the other signatories of the