

Canadians under the support of the federal government, which makes us the largest supporter of training than anyone in the country, including the provinces. I do not think the hon. member's figures are accurate.

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TRADE

ACCESS TO UNITED STATES MARKET FOR TELEPHONE EQUIPMENT

Hon. Perrin Beatty (Wellington-Dufferin-Simcoe): Madam Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce. Last year Canadian telephone equipment manufacturers sold approximately \$800 million worth of telephones and related equipment to the United States. Is the minister aware that at the present time there are two bills before the U.S. Congress which could have the effect of severely restricting, or closing down, the American market to Canadian sellers? What is he doing to protect Canadian interests?

Hon. Herb Gray (Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce and Minister of Regional Economic Expansion): Madam Speaker, officials of both External Affairs and my own department, under the direction of the Minister of State for International Trade and myself, are keeping closely in touch with the situation. We are prepared to see that appropriate representations are made to protect Canadian interests.

PROTECTION FOR CANADIAN MANUFACTURERS

Hon. Perrin Beatty (Wellington-Dufferin-Simcoe): Madam Speaker, what assurances can the minister give to Canadian workers and telecommunications manufacturers that their interests will be protected and that there is no possibility of their losing several hundreds of millions of dollars of sales per year?

● (1200)

Hon. Herb Gray (Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce and Minister of Regional Economic Expansion): Madam Speaker, at any one time in the United States Congress there are hundreds, if not thousands, of bills, and I think that to say that any one of them will actually become law is carrying things somewhat too far.

I want again to give the assurance to the House, and to the workers in question, that the Minister of State for Trade and I have instructed our officials to be in close touch with the situation and to make all necessary representations.

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CANADIAN NATIONAL RAILWAYS

ANNOUNCEMENT OF LAY-OFFS—GOVERNMENT POSITION

Mr. Bill Blaikie (Winnipeg-Birds Hill): Madam Speaker, yesterday the CNR announced it was laying off some 1,800

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people across the system, including over 200 in the Transcona shops, as a result of a downturn in revenues, a downturn which can be attributed to the slowdown in the economy brought on by the high interest rate policy of this government.

My question is directed to the Minister of Transport. What does the Minister of Transport have to say to all those young people in my riding who are losing their jobs just at a point when their mortgages have either come due or are coming due and when things would have been difficult anyway? Are they to be lectured by a cynical, burned out Prime Minister in the same way the premiers were last night, and is it the policy of this government to allow Crown corporations which are making profits to lay workers off and leave undone the considerable amount of work waiting for willing hands to do?

Hon. Jean-Luc Pepin (Minister of Transport): Madam Speaker, the first thing I would tell them would be to read what I said yesterday on this same subject, which was a bit more nuance than what the hon. member is saying now.

The other thing I would tell them—

Mr. Clark: Let them eat nuance.

Mr. Pepin: —is that we are on the verge of a major railway main line development in western Canada. I would tell them that there is \$1.35 billion in the budget for that, so my message would be extremely encouraging, and I am sure it would be very well received.

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THE ADMINISTRATION

DESIGNATION OF MINISTERIAL PORTFOLIOS

Hon. Yvon Pinard (President of the Privy Council): Madam Speaker, yesterday the Right Hon. Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Clark), his House leader and his former House leader—the three of them—raised a point of order and expressed concerns. I told them I would look into their concerns, which I did not share and still do not share, and come back to them with some answers.

I am prepared today very briefly to tell those hon. members what the situation is. I suppose the Right Hon. Leader of the Opposition followed my recommendation—

Mr. Clark: On motions.

Mr. Pinard: Would the right hon. member prefer to hear this on motions? It is a point of order, Madam Speaker. I prefer to speak now.

Mr. Clark: No, no. It is a statement on motions.

Mr. Pinard: I suggested to the Leader of the Opposition yesterday that he look at the statute and have someone explain it to him. I am sure he has done his homework, but nevertheless—

Mr. Clark: On a point of order, Madam Speaker—