

ment to visit Collins Bay Penitentiary and talk with some of the inmates there on a confidential basis?

**Hon. Mitchell Sharp (Acting Prime Minister):** Mr. Speaker, I will undertake to discuss this situation with the Solicitor General.

**Mr. Howard (Skeena):** A supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. Inasmuch, also, as the Solicitor General seems intent on keeping a lid of secrecy on all of these activities—

**Some hon. Members:** Oh, oh!

**Mr. Howard (Skeena):**—would the Acting Prime Minister mind looking into the reasons for maintaining the element of secrecy and ascertain whether in fact it is not just an attempt to cover up the blundering by the Solicitor General that has taken place?

**Mr. Speaker:** Order, please. That, of course, I suggest to the hon. member for Skeena is more a speech than a question.

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[Translation]

#### INDUSTRY

##### AYERS LIMITED—MEASURES TO PREVENT LAY-OFF OF 250 EMPLOYEES

**Mr. Réal Caouette (Témiscamingue):** Mr. Speaker, I should like to put a question to the Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce.

He is no doubt aware that the Ayers Co. of Lachute is now dismissing 250 workers and I would like to ask him whether the government is taking some steps to enable the Ayers Co. to carry on its operations and avoid the dismissal of those workers?

**Hon. Jean-Luc Pepin (Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce):** The answer is yes to both questions, Mr. Speaker. I am aware of the matter and my officials are now co-operating with the company to determine whether some of our programs could be useful under the circumstances.

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[English]

#### THE CANADIAN ECONOMY

##### INFLATION—CONSTITUTIONAL POWER OF GOVERNMENT TO INTRODUCE PRICE AND WAGE CONTROLS

**Hon. Marcel Lambert (Edmonton West):** My question is for the Acting Prime Minister. In light of recent statements by the Prime Minister and his cabinet colleague, the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs, that the government has an option with regard to compulsory price and wage controls, is it the view of the government that it has the normal constitutional powers in this area or is the government only justified in introducing such controls in the case of a national emergency? Also, are we

#### Inquiries of the Ministry

now going to have a declaration of national emergency in regard to inflation?

**Mr. Speaker:** I have some doubts as to the procedural acceptability of the first part of the hon. member's question, but perhaps someone on behalf of the government might reply to the last part of the question.

**Hon. Mitchell Sharp (Acting Prime Minister):** Mr. Speaker, what the hon. member has asked is really a legal question about which there are conflicting views. It is our view, and this is why we have been looking at the possible options for enforcing mandatory price and wage controls if it becomes necessary, that under the circumstances then existing we would have that authority. Otherwise, the exercise that we are undertaking would be futile.

**Mr. Lambert (Edmonton West):** If there is some legal doubt as to the constitutional powers of the government to institute such compulsory price and wage controls, why is this option being conveyed to the Canadian public by ministers of the Crown as a possible solution unless there is going to be some specific attempt to gain acceptance of such a program by the provinces?

**Mr. Speaker:** Again I hesitate to interrupt the Acting Prime Minister before he replies to the question, but I think that the supplementary is rather in the form of an argument.

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#### POLLUTION

##### OTTAWA RIVER—STEPS TO CLEAN UP AREA ADJACENT TO PARLIAMENT HILL

**Hon. George Hees (Prince Edward-Hastings):** I have a question for the Minister of Fisheries and Forestry in his capacity as minister in charge of the anti-pollution efforts of the government. Has the minister noticed the massive pollution floating on top of the once pure and clean Ottawa River and clearly visible from Parliament Hill? Will the minister take the first opportunity on motions to outline to the House and the country what steps the government has taken in the past year and is now taking under the Canada Water Act passed by Parliament a year ago in order to clean up the pollution on its own doorstep and thereby set an example to the rest of the country?

**Hon. Jack Davis (Minister of Fisheries and Forestry):** Mr. Speaker, I am sure all hon. members are aware of the pollution problem which we have on our doorstep, as the hon. member phrased it. Yesterday I discussed this and other problems with the responsible minister from the province of Quebec. I expect to discuss the same problem with the responsible minister from Ontario next week.

**Mr. Hees:** As I directed the same question a year ago to the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources, who at