

NORTH AMERICAN FREE TRADE AGREEMENT

Mr. David Barrett (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca): Madam Speaker, two days ago in the Manitoba legislature, the Conservative minister of trade raised his concerns about the NAFTA negotiations relative to the apparel industry.

It appears that the Conservative trade minister is concerned that under NAFTA, this government is going to force the apparel industry in Canada to buy all of its textiles either from Mexico or the United States. If that takes place, over 109,000 jobs will be at peril in Canada.

I want to ask whoever is the acting minister of trade today whether or not the concerns of the minister in Manitoba are valid? If not, will the government speak out today and say that no such deal will be signed to put those jobs at risk here in Canada.

Hon. John McDermid (Minister of State (Finance and Privatization)): Madam Speaker, I can tell the hon. member that negotiations are ongoing. One of the areas on which there is considerable discussion is the textile industry.

Canada of course is at the table to protect the textile and the garment industries in this country because they are both creators of employment and very important to the economy of this country.

My hon. friend did not want us at the table. He did not want the Government of Canada to be at the table to protect the interests of the textile and garment workers.

Well we are there and we are doing that.

Mr. David Barrett (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca): Madam Speaker, I would like to have thanked the minister for his answer but there is nothing there to be thankful for.

I am going to move now on the NAFTA issue to another minister and that is the Minister of Transport, Madam Speaker.

President Bush has just signed a presidential order that will permit Mexican truck drivers to drive their rigs right into the United States through California and perhaps other states. President Bush, signing on behalf of Canada, may have done the same thing.

Oral Questions

The reality is that under this presidential order Mexican truck drivers will be permitted to drive rigs that normally would have been driven by American truck drivers. As a consequence, jobs will be lost and wages will be lowered.

I want an assurance from the Minister of Transport here today that no such waiver will be given to Mexican trucks crossing through the United States and up into Canada. I want that assurance.

• (1450)

Hon. Jean Corbeil (Minister of Transport): Madam Speaker, I am not sure I understand the geography of the hon. member, but I can assure him that I attended the convention recently of the Canadian Trucking Association with the American Truckers Association and the Mexican Truckers Association. All of these players were very much in favour of free trade among the three countries in trucking.

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EMPLOYMENT

Mr. Russell MacLellan (Cape Breton—The Sydneys): Madam Speaker, my question is for the minister of employment. The minister will know that the unemployment rate on Cape Breton Island is now over 22 per cent. Yet there is no increase, probably there is a decrease, in the amount of job creation funding available.

For example, for the North Sydney—Sydney Mines area there remains only \$35,000 in the job creation fund and no more money will be forthcoming until April 1993.

When will the minister add some funds to the job creation program for Cape Breton Island?

Hon. Bernard Valcourt (Minister of Employment and Immigration): Mr. Speaker, I do not have the numbers for the region that the hon. member talks about but I can look into it.

What I can say is that last year the province of Nova Scotia, under the programming of my department, received over \$110 million and that figure is not going down. I can look at the specific area that the hon. member has raised and can advise him accordingly.

Mr. Russell MacLellan (Cape Breton—The Sydneys): Madam Speaker, I am sure the minister would acknowledge that Cape Bretoners, like all Canadians, want steady jobs. They are doing everything possible to find