

Oral Questions

he has lost the capacity to be embarrassed. That answer was unbelievable.

I would like to ask the minister a final supplementary question. Precisely what protests has Governor Bouey made to the United States? When and where did they occur, and precisely what was the response of the American government and the American Federal Reserve Board chairman as a result of the protest made by the Governor of the Bank of Canada?

Mr. MacEachen: Madam Speaker, I will try to give the hon. member as much information as I have at my disposal. The Governor of the Bank of Canada attended a meeting of central bank governors of several countries last week, and at that meeting he expressed the concerns which he later made public in Canada about the volatility and wide fluctuations in the short-term interest rates in the United States. That is the information I have and which I am very happy to convey, in an unblushing manner, to the hon. member.

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ATOMIC ENERGY CONTROL BOARD**AMENDMENTS TO STRENGTHEN HEALTH AND SAFETY REGULATIONS**

Mr. Maurice Foster (Algoma): Madam Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of State for Mines. In view of the recommendations contained in the report of the Ontario legislature's select committee on hydro affairs concerning the Atomic Energy Control Board and the meeting which was held on December 4 here in Ottawa with representatives of the board and the United Steelworkers of America from Elliot Lake—

An hon. Member: Caucus.

Mr. Foster:—can the minister assure the House that amendments to the Atomic Energy Control Board regulations will be made to strengthen the health and safety sections of those regulations?

Hon. Judy Erola (Minister of State, Mines): Madam Speaker, I thank the hon. member for Algoma for his question, although I had great difficulty hearing it.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mrs. Erola: However, I do believe I got the gist of it. Yes, I too share the hon. member's concern about the health and safety of workers in Elliot Lake. I would like to enlarge upon the question, if I may. As the hon. member knows, the select committee also made some recommendations, and I concur with many of them.

Mr. Clark: Order, Madam Speaker.

Mrs. Erola: I should like to add that I too feel that the AECB regulations do lack teeth. I will suggest to the Minister

of Energy, Mines and Resources that we give the AECB the proper measures to put teeth into its regulations.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. The mere fact that the hon. member is sitting next to the minister is no reason—

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Madam Speaker:—for me to deny the question. The hon. member is entitled to a public answer to his question.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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HOUSING**ASSISTANCE TO FIRST-TIME BUYERS—STIMULATION OF CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY**

Mr. Doug Lewis (Simcoe North): Madam Speaker, since interchanges between seatmates are in vogue, I would like to pose my question to the Minister of Finance. He has suggested that interest rates are tied to problems in the United States and to international money markets, but on December 5 his seatmate said, and I quote:

Madam Speaker, the formula introduced by the Minister of Finance is precisely that, an independent interest rate policy. It is set by the free market in Canada. It is not tied to an automatic index of United States interest rates.

During the election campaign we were accused of levying an 18-cent tax to pay for a mortgage interest and property tax credit, but since—

Some hon. Members: Question.

Mr. Lewis: It is coming; hon. members opposite just do not like the preamble. The minister has increased the price of gasoline. He has levied his own excise tax on gasoline. He has levied an additional tax on home heating fuel. What has the minister done for home owners?

Hon. Allan J. MacEachen (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance): Madam Speaker, it is not what I have done for home owners; it is what the House of Commons did for home owners last December when it stopped the former government from implementing that inequitable tax deductibility plan.

Mr. Lewis: Madam Speaker, if we can swing to another topic which is related, I suggest to the minister that there is one method he could use to free up the tight vacancy rate situation, and that would be to give first-time home owners an incentive which would stimulate the construction industry. What is the minister's policy to help first-time home owners in Canada?

Mr. MacEachen: Madam Speaker, that is a question of such dimensions that it could not be answered on the orders of the day.