

*Oral Questions***CAPE BRETON DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION****PAYMENT OF AMOUNT DUE PRERETIRED MINERS—
GOVERNMENT ACTION**

Mr. Robert Muir (Cape Breton-The Sydneys): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Regional Economic Expansion. It refers to the reply he gave to a question put by the hon. member for Cape Breton-East Richmond yesterday, regarding moneys due pre-retired coal miners in Cape Breton on whose behalf such a gallant effort was made by the former member for Cape Breton-East Richmond, Mr. MacInnis. In view of the assurances given by the minister and Mr. Tom Kent, president of the Cape Breton Development Corporation, the last time they appeared before the Standing Committee on Regional Development that they would do their utmost this fall to rectify in a financial way the injustices perpetrated on the Cape Breton coal miners who were pre-retired between 1969 and 1971, is it the intention of the minister to welsh on the assurances given at that time that were accepted in good faith by the hon. member for Cape Breton-East Richmond, the miners and myself?

[Translation]

Hon. Marcel Lessard (Minister of Regional Economic Expansion): Mr. Speaker, first of all I would like to emphasize that when the hon. member refers to moneys which are due, that is not, as he is well aware, the interpretation which has always been given. This was the topic of a lengthy discussion and we have agreed on that. We did say, and I reiterated myself, as my predecessor did before me, that we have been trying ever since the beginning to improve the pension scheme of those people. There was some improvement in the last few months and we have always said that we would try to do it as far as possible. Of course the whole thing is dependent on our financial possibilities and the problems facing us. We stated we had a role to play as far as workers in mining operations are concerned, that is our first responsibility in the immediate future. We shall continue to take care of those people and, if possible, of the workers who were previously employed by them.

[English]

Mr. Muir: Mr. Speaker, I was shocked by the minister's reply yesterday and I am doubly shocked today. Is the minister aware that his predecessors, including the hon. gentleman who is now Secretary of State for External Affairs and his predecessor, agreed that while there may not be a legal obligation there was a moral obligation? Is he not aware that there are many areas where money could be found in the wasteful spending of the government whereby this unjust treatment—

Mr. Horner: Just keep Otto at home for a few days.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Muir: I was just leading up to my question, Mr. Speaker.

[Mr. Macdonald (Rosedale).]

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The hon. member surely realizes the question is, in the minimum, argumentative. If the hon. member has a question to put to the minister within the understanding of the rules, I would be glad if he would do it.

Mr. Muir: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am sorry if I have breached the rules. I want to ask the minister if he is aware or shall I send him a memo outlining different areas where he could get this money? One of them would be the ¼ of a million dollars spent by the Minister of Transport flying back and forth across this country.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Horner: Clip Otto's wings; that's what we used to do with the turkeys.

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EXTERNAL AFFAIRS**PROPOSED LOAN TO CHILE BY CANADIAN BANKS—
GOVERNMENT POSITION**

Mr. John Rodriguez (Nickel Belt): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Secretary of State for External Affairs. In view of the fact that three Canadian banks, the Toronto Dominion, the Royal and the Bank of Nova Scotia, have formed a consortium to lend \$125 million to the bankrupt junta of Chile, and in view of the fact that since the International Monetary Fund has refused to support that country because of its mismanagement of the economy thus calling such a loan into question, on the basis of the government's loan criteria concerning "economic and technical merits" of the loan, and in view of the fact that the government has already involved itself politically in private economic affairs between countries by issuing a code of conduct—

Some hon. Members: Order!

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. Is it not possible to put that question without a preamble?

Mr. Rodriguez: Mr. Speaker, my question is this: is the Canadian government prepared to convey to the banks Canada's position on the Chilean junta's disrespect for human and civil rights in that unfortunate country and ask them to respect both the moral position of the Canadian government and the technical and economic unacceptability of the loan?

Hon. Donald C. Jamieson (Secretary of State for External Affairs): Mr. Speaker, the preamble was of such a nature that I have to confess I am having a little difficulty trying to follow it through. I will be glad to study the question but if I understood it correctly, I would say the banks are already aware of the Canadian government's position with regard to Chile. In so far as exerting any influence, however, this is a private banking transaction and I see no reason why we as a government should interfere in any way.

Mr. Speaker: One supplementary.