

● (1420)

On a daily basis those people are being laid off or are being told that they will be laid off, and if the leader wants to verify this, he can do so by checking with the member for York-Sunbury, the constituency in which Canadian Forces Base Gagetown is located. People are very concerned about this.

I was asked over the weekend to try to get an explanation as to why the current government is able to find what someone has said will be between \$75 million and \$100 million to replace the uniforms of the members of the Canadian Armed Forces while, at the same time, the government is trying to save money by laying off civilians working on military bases.

The government is cutting the number of jobs in two ways: first of all, by firing more people; and, second, by replacing civilian personnel with military personnel.

Of course, the Leader of the Government in the Senate knows that when military personnel are used as firefighters, mechanics, drivers, and so forth, this reduces the ability of the members of the Canadian Armed Forces to be flexible enough to do the jobs they are supposed to do.

Will the Leader of the Government in the Senate give an answer to my question that will assist those people in that situation?

Hon. Duff Roblin (Leader of the Government): I will refer the contents of my honourable friend's speech to the Minister of National Defence. No doubt, I will be able to provide further comments.

AGRICULTURE

SUGAR-BEET INDUSTRY—1983 STABILIZATION PAYMENT— GOVERNMENT POLICY

Hon. Joyce Fairbairn: Honourable senators, yesterday we heard what I thought was a real ray of hope from the Leader of the Government in the Senate concerning the possibility of an announcement in the very near future on a sugar-beet policy.

I wonder whether the Leader of the Government in the Senate can undertake, given the interest of members of this chamber in the topic over the past year, and because of the emergency debate which took place in this chamber, that when such a statement or announcement is made, it will be made in the Senate at the same time as it is in the House of Commons. If the Senate should not be sitting, could the Leader of the Government in the Senate undertake to see that those senators who have been interested in the issue shall be communicated with respecting that announcement?

Hon. Duff Roblin (Leader of the Government): Honourable senators, I should like to congratulate my honourable friend on her ingenuity, on her flexibility of mind and inventiveness. Every day she has asked me a question about the sugar-beet industry, and on each occasion she has been able to put a slightly different twist to the question, which has made it very interesting.

Some Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

[Senator Thériault.]

Senator Roblin: So, I wait to see every day what variation on the theme she is going to play.

I have heard what she has asked today, and I will give it serious consideration.

Senator Olson: The best answer we have received so far was given yesterday.

Hon. Gildas L. Molgat: If I may, honourable senators, I have a follow-up question on the same subject.

The Leader of the Government has said that there is a new twist to Senator Fairbairn's questions every day. Unfortunately, the new twist is becoming much more serious as time goes on and no decision is taken.

Last week, for example, in Winnipeg—and I do not know if the leader has seen this or not—the headline was: "City Sugar Firm Issues 70 Lay-off Notices." So, the sugar-beet refinery in Manitoba has sent its workers a three-month notice dated last week advising that jobs will be lost. We simply cannot afford to let this industry go down the drain in the way it is going, and it is going down the drain because of indecision.

Can the leader not make a positive statement that this industry will continue, or, at the very least, give us a specific date in the very, very near future on which an announcement will be made so that these people can make plans for the future? As it is, the leader can see the results—workers are being told that they will be laid off.

Senator Roblin: My honourable friend was here yesterday. He heard the reply that I gave yesterday to the same sort of question, and the same answer sticks.

Hon. H. A. Olson: I have a supplementary question. Did the Leader of the Government promise yesterday that he was going to deliver a reply by March 3 or did he not? He left it a little hazy. You could almost take out of it that certain things like a march on Parliament Hill might not be necessary by March 3. You know, that is a little subtle. Can we get past this haze and this subtlety? Can you tell us whether or not we can expect an answer by March 3?

Senator Roblin: The answer that I gave yesterday speaks for itself, honourable senators.

FRANCOPHONE SUMMIT

CANADIAN HEAD OF STATE—REPORTED STATEMENT BY PRIME MINISTER

Hon. Charles McElman: Honourable senators, as the bell rang today for gathering here, I was listening to a news report on the people's national network. It was reported that in Paris today the Prime Minister, the Right Honourable Brian Mulroney, had advised that he—in order to explain, I guess, the difference between himself and the Premier of Quebec—

Senator Flynn: And New Brunswick.

Senator McElman: No, just between himself and the Premier of Quebec. He was advising that he is the Head of State for Canada.