

*Oral Questions***EMPLOYMENT**

Mrs. Shirley Maheu (Saint-Laurent—Cartierville): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the minister responsible for job losses in Montreal, the Minister of Labour.

There have been more job losses in Montreal! The closing of the Gattuso plant in Saint-Laurent will have a disastrous effect on the employees. Why does the government continue with its policy that results in the total or partial shutdown of factories, like Gattuso, VIA Rail, Domtar, Gillette, Vickers and Kraft, to name only these?

Hon. Benoît Bouchard (Minister of Industry, Science and Technology): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member should know that the government does not make this kind of decision in the place of private enterprise.

However, Catelli has acquired the Campbell Company in the area mentioned by my colleague and as part of the streamlining process—and the pasta market in particular is undergoing a streamlining right now—the company, like other companies, decided to streamline and to make itself competitive in the market, nationally and internationally.

I understand that this concept was not so popular when the hon. member's party was in power, but we are in the situation we find ourselves today because of that, Mr. Speaker.

• (1440)

Mrs. Shirley Maheu (Saint-Laurent—Cartierville): Mr. Speaker, that answer is not going to help 9,000 employees—or their families for that matter—at more than 80 plants in Montreal, who lost their jobs during the past year. When will the government finally act to help thousands of Quebecers who have lost their jobs as a result of this government's disastrous policies?

Hon. Benoît Bouchard (Minister of Industry, Science and Technology): Mr. Speaker, I must say I am surprised. Although I trust the hon. member, I certainly do not trust the figures she is providing. She should also mention the \$250 million contract Canadair obtained today.

An hon. member: In her own riding!

Mr. Bouchard (Roberval): Mr. Speaker, she should mention the amounts we invested in Southwest and East Montreal. Mr. Speaker, I told the hon. member's colleague from Notre-Dame-de-Grâce last week that thanks to the Conservative government's policies, the Montreal region is now recovering from a situation created by the gang of Liberal ministers from Montreal, when they were in power.

An hon. member: The Liberals wanted to close Canadair!

* * *

[*English*]

SCOTIA SYNFUELS PROJECT

Mr. Francis G. LeBlanc (Cape Breton Highlands—Canso): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the minister responsible for ACOA. It concerns the Scotia Synfuels coal liquefaction project in Cape Breton. The project, as the minister knows, will generate up to 2,000 permanent jobs and ensure an environmentally sound future for Cape Breton coal. It has the strong support of the Premier of Nova Scotia and the mayors and wardens in the area. The only delay in proceeding with this vital project is approval by the federal government of a Cape Breton tax credit application and the incentives provided in the Atlantic Enterprise Program.

My question to the minister is this. When will his government give its long awaited approval to this application?

Hon. Elmer M. MacKay (Minister of Public Works): Mr. Speaker, I recently attended a meeting of some wardens and municipal leaders in Cape Breton, as the hon. member knows. He is correct. There is a very strong unanimous feeling that this project should be studied closely. I am not in a position to give him a commitment today, but the matter is under consideration. When I or my colleagues have something to announce, we will make that announcement in due course.

Mr. Dave Dingwall (Cape Breton—East Richmond): Mr. Speaker, a supplementary to the same minister.

The minister will know that the downsizing of the coal and steel industries, coupled with the fact that our fisheries in Atlantic Canada are in terrible shape, leaves the Cape Breton economy in a very serious and somewhat precarious situation. The minister also knows that