

Oral Questions

Can the minister inform us today, since we have 33 mayors and some 80 councillors from the area north of Montreal, whether that in itself constitutes an expression of political will and, if so, could he inform us when a decision will be forthcoming from his department?

Hon. Jean-Luc Pepin (Minister of Transport): Madam Speaker, I would be the first person to admit that will plays a very important role, but it is also important to understand the subject. What I mean is that regarding the future of Mirabel we now have two highly contradictory views, one of which is represented, and I would say remarkably well, by the mayors in our visitors' gallery. Next week, I shall probably have as many or more mayors who represent a different point of view. Thus, the Mirabel issue is not a cut and dried case.

I put the problem to my colleagues a few months ago, and I intend to do so again in even more specific terms within the next few days. I can assure our present and future visitors that a decision will be made within the next two or three months, since a consensus has been reached on the need for a decision.

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[English]

INDUSTRY**GOVERNMENT POLICY ON CLOTHING, TEXTILES AND FOOTWEAR INDUSTRIES**

Mr. Derek Blackburn (Brant): Madam Speaker, my question is directed to the Prime Minister. Recently Senator Olson stated, and I quote:

We're going to stop propping up mature industries that will never be competitive in this generation, like clothing, textiles, footwear and a number of others.

It appears that our minister responsible for economic development is unaware that there are approximately 300,000 Canadians working in these industries, many of them in the province of Quebec. From all reports some Liberal MPs know and are concerned that we have more than 1.2 million Canadians already searching for jobs that do not exist. Is it government policy to disregard the pleas within its own caucus and the plight of these Canadians and, instead of creating jobs for the people who desperately need them, to start spelling out who is next on its lay-off hit list?

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Madam Speaker, the hon. member is showing a little bit of misunderstanding of the policy announced by the government in recent months in the areas of textile, clothing and the shoe industries. Rather than force workers out of work, as the hon. member seems to suggest, we have continued the protection to these industries. At the same time, rather than having the reactionary approach which is so typical in many things of the NDP, we have created a Canadian Industrial Renewal Board to ensure that in an industry where workers are generally paid far below the Canadian industrial average, that industry is reinforced and strengthened in some areas and, in those areas where it is not competitive, that new industries are brought in

which would be technologically more advanced and which would provide for higher wages. Something less than \$300 million has been allocated to that board, composed of industries and eminent businessmen from the private sector in several provinces, including Quebec, so that this joint task, government working hand in hand with the industry, management, and workers, would provide a much better future for the workers presently employed in those industries.

Mr. Blackburn: I gather from the Prime Minister's answer we can look forward to a very rosy future in those three industries, footwear, textile and clothing. I hope that comes true.

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TRADE**BILATERAL DISCUSSIONS—INQUIRY RESPECTING CANADIAN POSITION**

Mr. Derek Blackburn (Brant): Madam Speaker, my supplementary question is to the Secretary of State for External Affairs. In the past few months 20,000 workers have lost their jobs in the clothing and textile industries and countless others have had their jobs reduced to part time. On Thursday, Canadian negotiators are leaving for Hong Kong to start a new round of bilateral trade discussions. Will the minister assure this House that the mandate of these negotiators is not to weaken further the position of these industries in Canada, but to protect their workers by requiring that our negotiators bargain for the maintenance of actual import levels of 1981, or the restoration of the import quotas of 1979, whichever is the lower?

Hon. Mark MacGuigan (Secretary of State for External Affairs): Madam Speaker, it is not customary to reveal the exact mandate of negotiators for the Canadian government before negotiations take place, but I can certainly assure the hon. gentleman that the purpose of those negotiators will be to protect the interest of Canadians and Canadian jobs.

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[Translation]

AIRPORTS**MIRABEL—INQUIRY RESPECTING DATE OF DECISION**

Hon. Roch La Salle (Joliette): Madam Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Transport, considering the presence today in our visitors' gallery of a delegation of mayors who are, of course, interested in air transport. The minister has confirmed that he is expecting another delegation next week. More importantly, Madam Speaker, the minister has just told us today, on television in front of thousands of Canadians, that a decision is to be made within two or three months. Can the minister give us the assurance that the decision will be made public not later than June 1?