

ENERGY

SYNCRUDE PROJECT—EFFECT ON INVESTMENT COMMUNITY AND EMPLOYMENT

Mr. Cyril Symes (Sault Ste. Marie): Mr. Speaker, in view of the dramatic increase in unemployment in Ontario, which rose from 4.4 per cent in December to 7.1 per cent in January, and in view of statements by Premier Davis that the Syncrude project will create jobs with Ontario equipment and contracting companies, can the minister explain how Syncrude will promote any significant investment and job creation in Canada when only 22 per cent of the engineering work is being done by Canadians, and when Bechtel is buying most of the heavy equipment and components from United States firms?

Hon. Donald S. Macdonald (Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources): I would be glad to investigate the matter.

Mr. Symes: Now that the government is a partner in Syncrude, and since unemployment is on the rise in Canada, will the government insist that the majority of the engineering and contracting work for Syncrude go to Canadian and not United States firms?

Mr. Macdonald (Rosedale): We would not insist upon any such requirement if the result were to further escalate the cost of the project.

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LABOUR RELATIONS

STRIKE BY CANADIAN MINT EMPLOYEES—REQUEST FOR PROGRESS REPORT ON SETTLEMENT NEGOTIATIONS

Hon. Marcel Lambert (Edmonton West): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the President of the Treasury Board. In view of the fact that all strikes by public servants are fought on the back of a defenceless public, may I ask what progress has been made with regard to the strike in the Mint which is causing severe inconvenience to business people and the general public?

[Translation]

Hon. Jean Chrétien (President of Treasury Board): Mr. Speaker, the employees are on strike, but since the Royal Canadian Mint is a Crown corporation, this part of the negotiation is not my responsibility, but that of my colleague, the Minister of Supply and Services.

[English]

Mr. Lambert (Edmonton West): May I, then, direct my question to the other minister?

[Translation]

I would ask the minister what progress has been made toward the settlement of the dispute between the Royal Mint and its employees, since all strikes in the civil service or within Crown corporations are made "on the back", and I repeat, "on the back" of the public which is defenceless.

Hon. Jean-Pierre Goyer (Minister of Supply and Services): Mr. Speaker, at the request of the Minister of Labour, the parties met yesterday with a mediator and are

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meeting again today. I have already indicated that we were ready to go ahead, providing the union shows willingness to do the same. What we need is two-way—not one-way—negotiations and I hope that some progress can be made today.

[English]

POSSIBLE STRIKE OF AIRPORT EMPLOYEES—GOVERNMENT ACTION TO AVERT

Mr. Erik Nielsen (Yukon): A supplementary question to the President of the Treasury Board with respect to the imminent possibility of airports across the country closing by midnight on Friday in consequence of the parties not agreeing on the report of the conciliation board. What steps are being taken by the minister to see that the parties get back to the bargaining table as soon as possible, in order to avert strike action?

[Translation]

Hon. Jean Chrétien (President of Treasury Board): Mr. Speaker, I know that yesterday, leaders of the Public Service Alliance got in touch with my officials. They were supposed to have further talks today. I think the situation now is as follows: the alliance is waiting for the final report on the employees' votes. Afterwards, we will try to avoid a strike, but in any case, as of Friday, the employees will have the right to go on strike and, as Parliament intended it, we must respect that right.

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[English]

MANPOWER

DEPARTMENTAL ACTION TO IMPROVE EFFECTIVENESS AND RETRAINING PROGRAMS

Mr. Lincoln M. Alexander (Hamilton West): Mr. Speaker, I wish to direct a question to the Minister of Manpower and Immigration arising from the fact that unemployment is now running at the rate of 6.7 per cent, an unacceptable rate, affecting some 817,000 people. Since it would appear that our Manpower services are becoming less and less effective and that employers, particularly in the construction industry, are finding it increasingly difficult to get workers with the required skills, I ask the minister what bold, imaginative, new steps he is contemplating for immediate introduction which would make the Manpower office more effective and better able to undertake the retraining which is necessary?

Hon. Robert K. Andras (Minister of Manpower and Immigration): If the hon. member would like to spend an hour or two with me, I would review all the measures which have been taken and which I described to him in the course of many meetings of the standing committee. We could start with the total reconversion of Manpower offices into job information centres; we could talk about the total reorganization of the Manpower Department; we could talk about the Newfoundland—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!