

Oral Questions

Hon. Don Mazankowski (Deputy Prime Minister, President of the Privy Council and Minister of Agriculture): Mr. Speaker, as the hon. member knows, the Prime Minister is engaged with the visit of Mr. Mandela, and he will be with him most of the day.

I have attempted to be as forthcoming as I possibly can in my willingness to table the letter outlining all the conditions and the proposals that were put forth.

The Prime Minister has always sought the earliest possible opportunity to come before the House to explain the proceedings. I have no doubt that he will be prepared to do that as well.

I can give the hon. member the assurance that at the appropriate time the Prime Minister will come to the House and advise all hon. members as to the details of the discussions and what may be proposed for the future.

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• (1450)

[*Translation*]

NATIONAL REVENUE

Mr. Guy Saint-Julien (Abitibi): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of National Revenue. The federal government has closed the Canadian Forces Base in Senneterre, and the mayor, Mr. Gérard Lafontaine, has asked the government to establish a regional administration centre on the premises, since the government will save Canadians \$600,000 by locating these offices in Senneterre. The question is as follows: Is the minister or the government prepared to consider seriously this free offer by the town of Senneterre?

[*English*]

Hon. John McDermid (Minister of State (Privatization and Regulatory Affairs)): Mr. Speaker, I have been advised by the Minister of National Revenue that he discussed this matter with the hon. member before.

On the minister's behalf I can inform the hon. member for Abitibi that the Department of National Revenue is continuing to review this matter, taking both the important representations of the hon. member and the mayor of Senneterre into consideration. He hopes to have an answer for him in the not too distant future.

ROUTE CANADA

Mr. Joe Comuzzi (Thunder Bay—Nipigon): Mr. Speaker, last Friday the Minister of Transport said that the records of CN Route are with the trustee in bankruptcy. After Question Period I went to Toronto and visited with the trustee in bankruptcy. I am informed that not all the records that I had asked to be tabled are with the trustee in bankruptcy.

I am more convinced after spending at least three hours with the trustee that the 1,900 employees of CN Route never had a chance. They were doomed from the day the deal took place.

How could this government which had to sign and give its consent to every transaction concerning the sale of CN Route not look after the best interests of those employees?

Hon. Doug Lewis (Minister of Transport): Mr. Speaker, as has been read into the record on several occasions, including the two letters that I have tabled, the Route Canada situation was this. The company had been losing between \$40 million and \$50 million a year. You can only go on doing that for so long before you run out of money.

CN had a decision to make. It was either to shut down the company and terminate the jobs of all the employees or to sell it as a going concern to the Fingold brothers in an effort to help the employees maintain their jobs. That was the decision taken by the CN board of directors. I think it acted in all good faith on behalf of the employees who thus retained their jobs.

Mr. Joe Comuzzi (Thunder Bay—Nipigon): Mr. Speaker, we had some discussion in this House a short while ago about the bonuses paid to all of the CN executives. I wonder if those CN executives who were running this company at a \$40 million and \$50 million a year loss were paid bonuses for running the company so well.

The supplementary that I want to ask is this. How could the government allow the real estate and the equipment, the most valuable assets of CN Route, to be sheltered from bankruptcy so that the employees had no chance of ever gaining their severance pay, their vacation pay and their pension benefits?