

Oral Questions

on. He has worked with myself previously and with the union on a series of matters.

This situation comes on the heels of the announcement by the Iron Ore Company of Canada, in Labrador City, of a loss of 350 jobs, and the linerboard plant in Newfoundland with a loss of 2,100 jobs. How soon can the minister meet with the executive of the United Mine Workers of America in order to discuss this very important situation?

Hon. John C. Munro (Minister of Labour): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the hon. member giving me notice of his question. I have also received a wire from Mr. William Marsh, president of the United Mine Workers of America. Most certainly, I am prepared to meet with him at the earliest possible opportunity. My office is letting him know that right now. I would be pleased to have the hon. member for Cape Breton-The Sydneys there, and other hon. members involved, if they desire to attend.

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REGIONAL ECONOMIC EXPANSION**REQUESTED GOVERNMENT ACTION TO AVOID MINE CLOSING ON CAPE BRETON ISLAND**

Mr. Robert Muir (Cape Breton-The Sydneys): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the hon. Minister of Regional Economic Expansion who reports to the House for the Cape Breton Development Corporation. Is he, also, prepared to meet with the United Mine Workers of America as soon as possible in order to ascertain if there is not some way this mine can be kept in operation? It involves approximately 300 employees. God knows what they are going to do. The situation is very serious. Every day we hear announcements of unemployment, unemployment and lay-offs. Is the minister prepared to meet with the union tomorrow? They will come to Ottawa tomorrow, or Sunday, and meet with him if he wishes.

Hon. Marcel Lessard (Minister of Regional Economic Expansion): Mr. Speaker, the decision to close, as the hon. member referred to it, has not been taken in the sense he alluded to. The people are not going to be laid off. What the situation needs, as the hon. member already knows, is the question of security, first, and also the question of the very high cost which is involved right now in trying to mine the coal with the present system at the new Prince mine. An alternative to the present system of mining this coal is now being contemplated. Obviously, we will look for a different system of reaching the coal. We might have to go deeper, implement a safer system and a less costly one.

To attain a regular standard of security in the present system, we are required to work at a very high cost of operation, which makes the entire operation not viable. We intend to keep all the workers at work, but they will not necessarily be involved in the same operations as they are now. I understand all of them will be retained at work, but they will be doing different work in different places for some time until

[Mr. Muir.]

the present difficulties in the pillar and wall system, which is in operation, have been resolved.

*[Translation]***QUEBEC—REQUEST FOR PROGRESS REPORT ON NEGOTIATIONS FOR EXPANSION OF TOURISM**

Mr. Alexandre Cyr (Gaspé): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Regional Economic Expansion. Many representations from hon. members have been made to the minister for launching a program to stimulate the tourist industry in the province of Quebec, particularly in the Gaspé area. Would he tell the House whether he is still negotiating a subagreement with the province of Quebec for developing the tourist industry in that province and more specifically in the Gaspé area?

Hon. Marcel Lessard (Minister of Regional Economic Expansion): Yes, Mr. Speaker, we are still negotiating and as I indicated a few weeks ago when I was in Quebec City, we hope to be able to finalize those negotiations soon and ratify this agreement which is very important as hon. members know already, since some of them have been consulted and informed to some extent of the promising results which could be achieved through this proposal. So, I hope we will be able to sign this agreement during the coming weeks.

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*[English]***NATIONAL SECURITY****SOVIET NATIONALS ENGAGED IN SUBVERSIVE ACTIVITIES IN CANADA—GOVERNMENT ACTION TO PREVENT**

Mr. Bill Jarvis (Perth-Wilmot): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Solicitor General, who confirmed yesterday the accuracy of certain statements regarding foreign intelligence activities in Canada. One such statement was made in the House on February 21, to the effect that 28 out of 61 Soviet officials in Canada were engaged in intelligence activities. Of course, we know that 13 of these Soviet nationals were expelled. With regard to the remainder, who allegedly continue to be engaged in intelligence activities in Canada, can the Solicitor General tell the House how long he or his predecessor knew about this, and what action they have taken?

Hon. J.-J. Blais (Solicitor General): Mr. Speaker, the matter has not been changed: the nature of the replies I made previously is not going to change as a result of the events which occurred yesterday. I am sure the hon. member recognizes that, indeed, matters of national security are not subject to public comment, no more today than they were yesterday or the day before.

● (1142)

I regret having had to pursue the matter in the way it was pursued yesterday, because in fact even that was detrimental