

come up with one specific program and proposal for the automotive industry in Canada. He had the gall and the audacity earlier today in the debate to tell us—I checked in the blues—that the Progressive Conservatives want 16,000 Chrysler employees out of work. He told us that the PCs want Canadian small businesses to close down. I suggest that if that is not a lie, then it is the furthest thing from the truth.

● (2150)

**An hon. Member:** Watch it.

**Mr. Jelinek:** The minister dares, after sitting in the House for only three or four months, to try to turn the tables and blame the Conservative government for the loss of jobs, for the inaction in the automotive industry, when it was under his leadership and when he was Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce that the Canadian labour force in the auto industry had decreased. The lay-offs did not begin to take place when the Conservatives were in government. They began to take place when the minister took over.

I realize that it is not solely the minister's fault, that a great part of the problem stems from the negative economic trends in the United States and the ailing auto industry in that country. I also realized, and perhaps it should be stated more often, that the big auto makers are greatly to blame for the problems they are experiencing within their own industry today for not having the foresight to look toward smaller and more efficient automobiles. I realize all those things, Mr. Speaker. But that is not to say that the government can sit idly by without taking any positive steps to assist the program.

The minister went to Washington to meet with his counterparts at a well-publicized, well-touted meeting a few weeks ago. What are the results of that meeting? I will read you from the minister's own press release. The main result of that meeting was that "they agreed to hold further discussions." I tell you, I am fed up with just discussions, the automobile industry is fed up with just discussions, and the unemployed are fed up with just discussions; they want action. There are things that could be taking place today. The minister did not outline an auto pact presentation that he was going to make to his U.S. counterparts. He has admitted that in his press release and in his answers to our questions over the past few weeks. Now he has the nerve to come here and try to turn the tables and blame us. I just hope that the minister will have enough sense either to explain the position he took earlier today, which I called the closest thing to a lie, or withdraw the statement.

There is no excuse, in my view, for the Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce and the government to stand idly by and just hold discussions while tens of thousands of Canadians are hit with massive lay-offs. Perhaps the minister has been preoccupied until now with the \$200 million package to Chrysler Canada which, as you know, happens to be located in his own riding in Windsor.

**Mr. Baker (Nepean-Carleton):** He is thinking about the Liberal leadership.

### *Economic Development*

**Mr. Jelinek:** Perhaps the minister is thinking about the Liberal leadership, as my colleague says. He is certainly acting like that in the question period.

**Some hon. Members:** Oh, oh!

**Mr. Jelinek:** Perhaps the minister does not realize that the auto industry is suffering in other parts of Canada as well, in such places as Oakville, Oshawa, Brampton, St. Catharines, St. Thomas, to name just a few. Even the Chrysler proposal seems to have been a sham since less than 48 hours after receiving the \$200 million loan guarantee, Chrysler of Canada laid off a further 1,400 people without even a peep from the minister and this government. Yet, when the minister gave the loan guarantee, he knew that Chrysler would lay off 1,400 more people.

**An hon. Member:** Does he care?

**Mr. Jelinek:** Does he care, my hon. friend for Etobicoke Centre asks. I do not think he can care because he has not taken any action. Why has the minister not taken some immediate, short-term steps while he has taken the long-term steps in renegotiating the auto pact with the United States? The short-term steps I refer to are steps such as removing the 9 per cent federal excise tax from cars assembled or manufactured in Canada. I know it is a small step, but at least it is a step in the right direction. That alone would reduce the cost of vehicles built in Canada and thereby stimulate sales to a certain extent. The loss of revenue from the tax to the government could easily be offset by the saving in unemployment insurance benefits which, as of today, have already reached the staggering sum of \$5 million a week within the auto industry alone, not to mention the secondary manufacturing sector.

Why has the minister not taken up the suggestion of eliminating the \$100 excise tax on vehicles with air conditioners? If he had talked to the dealers across the country he would know that that alone would help move inventory from dealerships in this country.

Why has the minister not adopted the recommendation to impose quotas on offshore imports of automobiles? It would not be a precedent-setting case. The same government imposed textile quotas when the Canadian textile industry was in trouble, and this side of the House approved that. It imposed shoe quotas when the Canadian shoe industry was in trouble, and we supported that. Why is there not some action? If the minister does not want to accept the recommendations we and other interested groups are making, why does he not come up with some solutions of his own? Lada cars are being sold in Canada and promoted by the minister. That is fantastic. We are buying cars from a country which has invaded Afghanistan and butchered innocent men, women and children. We are doing the right thing so far as the Olympic boycott is concerned and, hypocritically, on the other hand the government is supporting the sale of Lada cars when thousands of auto workers in Canada are unemployed.

**Mr. Gray:** Are you against selling wheat? Is that it?