

Oral Questions

proposed for completion is to serve, and that hard decisions will have to be taken at that time. At the moment it is not possible really to be concrete, specific and definite about the shape of the negotiations.

Mr. Crosbie: Mr. Speaker, the hon. President of Privy Council will know that impartial observers such as the Science Council of Canada have determined that Canadian industry is in such weak shape now that we face the possibility of deindustrialization, and that even here in the industrial heartland of Canada we have employment in the St. Catharines region in excess of 13 per cent, in Kitchener 10 per cent, and the like.

My question to the Acting Prime Minister is: In view of the fact that our major negotiating suggestion, that we should proceed with sectoral negotiations—we agreed to the Swiss formula and we asked that there be sectoral negotiations, particularly to help our resource industries—in view of the fact that has been rejected by the United States and the nations of the European Economic Community, in view of the fact that our industry only operates at an 80 per cent capacity and its future is dubious-looking at the moment, and in view of the fact that our industry does not have any idea what adjustment assistance they might get—the weaker sectors of our industry such as textiles—if tariffs are lowered in Canada, what steps can the Acting Prime Minister and the government take to give some reassurance to Canadian industry and business that they are going to be supportive of them through this difficult period?

What are the plans for those industries that may have to go by the board if the government continues with these negotiations as they are now?

● (1427)

Mr. MacEachen: Mr. Speaker, I believe the hon. gentleman is incorrect in saying that at this stage there is no prospect of successful sector negotiations by Canada. He may turn out to be right in the long run; but certainly in the proposals that have been put forward by the United States, in some cases offering broad tax cuts, they could accommodate Canadian sector negotiations. The United States will, of course, expect to be compensated for whatever concessions it makes. We have not abandoned that sector approach and I think it is much too early to do so. If we did fail and it were not possible to achieve some progress with the sector negotiations, then, of course, Canada would not be able to offer as much to its partners in the way of trade concessions as it would if the sector negotiations had been successful.

The hon. gentleman mentions textiles. I think it should be recognized, because there is concern in the country, that there is very great concern in the negotiations themselves as to the state of the textiles industry in many countries of the world; but it would be my prediction that it is unlikely the textiles industry will have to face deep cuts as a result of these negotiations, based upon the present atmosphere in respect of negotiations. The hon. member is right about adjustment assistance. It will be required in certain cases and will be

[Mr. MacEachen.]

provided by the provincial governments and in some cases by the federal government.

Some hon. Members: Order.

Mr. MacEachen: Mr. Speaker, I know there may be some objection to the length of the answer, but there was a series of questions and in courtesy to the hon. member I am attempting to answer.

An hon. Member: You should make a statement on motions.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

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[Translation]

NATIONAL DEFENCE

INQUIRY WHETHER LAUZON, QUEBEC, SHIPYARDS WILL BE AWARDED CONSTRUCTION CONTRACT

Mr. Adrien Lambert (Bellechasse): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of National Defence. A few weeks ago, members of the federal government were in Lauzon, the site of a very large shipyard and a municipality where the rate of unemployment is very high. They tried to reassure the workers by announcing a project concerning the construction of ships for the Department of National Defence. Right now the workers are very much concerned because the unemployment rate is increasing and the yard lays workers off. In order to alleviate the unemployment plague in the area of Lévis and on the south shore, could the Minister of National Defence tell the House whether he seriously plans to award in the near future a construction contract to the yards in Lauzon?

[English]

Hon. Barney Danson (Minister of National Defence): Mr. Speaker, we are looking at this matter very closely, trying to accelerate specifications so the ship repair and refit programs we have in line can be started as soon as possible. My colleague, the Minister of Supply and Services, is also working with my department to accelerate this procedure to the extent we can; but I am afraid I cannot say there will be the immediate placement of orders, because this has to be done through the tender process.

We will do all we can, because we are aware of the situation, to make certain that the shipyards at Lauzon are given every opportunity at the earliest possible moment. I might say, in the absence of the Minister of Transport, that we are also looking at other avenues which might help that shipyard, in response particularly to the great representations that have been made on its behalf by my colleague, the hon. member for Lévis.