

Inquiries of the Ministry

[Translation]

Hon. Gérard Pelletier (Secretary of State): Mr. Speaker, this question was examined by Mr. Saumier who stated in his report that he thought this policy was sound and necessary at this time.

[English]

Mr. Rose: A supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. I ask the minister if he will give consideration to making a statement on motions in the near future on a comprehensive cultural policy for Canada?

[Translation]

Mr. Pelletier: Mr. Speaker, this matter is under review and the hon. member will agree, I think, that a cultural policy cannot be drafted in a few weeks or even a few months; in any case, I think that the work undertaken long ago by the department of the Secretary of State should produce results within a few months.

LABOUR CONDITIONS**DAVIE SHIPBUILDING COMPANY—PROVISION FOR EMPLOYEES IN EVENT OF CLOSURE**

Mr. Bernard Dumont (Frontenac): From the defunct Department of Forestry and Rural Development, and from the living Minister of Regional Economic Expansion, I would like to know if an alternative exists for the 4,000 workers at the Lauzon shipyards who may be laid off following the eventual closing of Davie Shipbuilding?

Hon. Jean Marchand (Minister of Regional Economic Expansion): Mr. Speaker, the Lauzon area is a designated area. We are preparing a program, in co-operation with the province of Quebec, and we are actively considering the case of the 4,000 workers at the Lauzon shipyards.

[English]

MINIMUM WAGE—INQUIRY AS TO INCREASE

Hon. George Hees (Prince Edward-Has-tings): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Minister of Labour. Is the minister planning in the near future to raise the minimum wage in industries under federal jurisdiction? It is nearly five years now since the minimum wage was raised and the cost of living has gone up 20 per cent in the intervening period.

Hon. Bryce Mackasey (Minister of Labour): Mr. Speaker, I have mentioned on several occasions that we are studying this matter.

The only consolation I have is that less than 5,000 people in the federal field are working at the minimum wage level. So apart from the psychological effect it has no real effect, or at least very little on very few people.

Mr. Hees: Mr. Speaker, I should like to address a supplementary question to the Prime Minister as the Minister of Labour gave me almost exactly the same answer a year and a half ago. Is the policy of forcing people to live farther and farther below the poverty level the fundamental basis of his just society?

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Hees: The Prime Minister nods his head, which means yes.

An hon. Member: He is shy today.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

CAPE BRETON DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION**BENEFITS PAID RETIRED COAL MINERS**

Mr. Robert Muir (Cape Breton-The Syd-neys): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the right hon. Prime Minister and concerns the method used by the Cape Breton Development Corporation to compensate retired coal miners. Further to the question posed to the Prime Minister on Tuesday of this week asking for an investigation into the whole matter in view of the continuing protests from the unions concerned and in view of the fact that the Prime Minister took my question as notice, may I ask the right hon. gentleman if he is in a position to shed any further light on this subject?

An hon. Member: Not today.

Hon. Bryce Mackasey (Minister of Labour): The answer so far as the Unemployment Insurance Commission is concerned is that the income received by the retired miners as a result of arrangements made between Devco and the unions representing them has been classed by regulation in the same category as income from dividends and therefore these unemployed miners are not penalized in respect of being eligible for unemployment insurance. If that is a violation of the Unemployment Insurance Commission regulations, and unless someone can prove it is, I am at a loss to understand what good it would do the miners to find this source of income suddenly removed.