

The Budget

Most of you would recognize as well that we need to invest heavily in education, in training and retraining, research and development, science and technology. If we want to be leaders as opposed to followers, that is the path we need to follow.

We need to expand our markets. We need to go beyond the United States because even though the United States is a very important neighbour, a very important trading partner, it is like putting all our eggs in one basket. It is not good to have all of our eggs in one basket. It is not good at all.

Of course, we have to look to see whether or not it is an appropriate time now as we get it from the U.S. with respect to softwood lumber and other problems, to sit down with the United States and say: "This Canada-U.S. agreement has got to be renegotiated".

[*Translation*]

I was just warming up, but I realize my time is up.

Mr. Vincent Della Noce (Parliamentary Secretary to Secretary of State and to Minister of Multiculturalism and Citizenship): Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate my hon. colleague for his speech. I listened to him very carefully. I must say that I agree with most of what he said. But at some point, he talked about the United States and used his figures. He will understand why I cannot agree 100 per cent with him. However, he did address an issue, about which even his own colleague asked: Is this country shrinking? No, this country is growing. But how can we get this economy going when in my area, about 30 kilometres from my office, we have a union that refused a 4.5 per cent increase at this time of the year?

It refused a 4.5 per cent increase on a contract left on the table when these people have, at the present time, up to \$22.14 per hour and a guaranteed salary of 65 hours per month. If they work 52 hours they are paid for 62. Instead of \$19.08 an hour they can go up to \$22.14, if my calculation is right, give or take 1 or 2 per cent. If they would work like us, 60 hours per week, they would make \$90,000. My question is very simple. How can we grow and ask this country to grow when there are people with signs on a couple of ropes around their necks who say:

"The company is no good, but you are going to fly with us when the strike is over because we are not happy with 4.5 per cent increase when we make \$22.14 per hour".

• (1700)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Duhamel: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for his question, because it is a very serious question. I will try to be serious in providing an answer.

[*English*]

First of all, I do not think that you wanted to imply that all unions are the same as the one that you have identified. I think that is very important.

I think that you and I and others will acknowledge that whatever group we deal with, when it tastes power and perhaps sometimes when it has a great deal of power it does not always use it as sensitively as it might.

I cannot make an accusation with respect to that union because I do not know the details as you have recounted them to me. But we have to recognize that it does not matter if it is a union, a government, a political party, or a large business, some people are not always as sensitive or as gentle as they might be. They do not always see the world perhaps as they should. Perhaps sometimes they think of themselves first and the people they represent after and that is not fair.

The other point with respect to the rate per hour, it sounds pretty good, but we have to remember this. You and I work many hours and we get paid a reasonable salary for it. Certainly I am quite pleased. But some of those people may not be able to work the hours that we work even if they wanted to. We have to remember that. It is very important.

Also, even if they could work those number of hours, I suspect that the work is not always very interesting. That is not a reason for not working. I assure you that I have had a lot of jobs that have not been nearly as interesting as this one and I have spent a lot of hours at those jobs. But we have to acknowledge that for certain jobs, working more than 40 hours per week, 50, 60, 70 hours would be particularly difficult and hurtful to the individual.