

Right Hon. Joe Clark (Secretary of State for External Affairs): Mr. Speaker, a few moments ago that precise question was raised by the Progressive Conservative Member for Kent and it was replied to by the Minister of the Environment.

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TRADE

REMOVAL OF TARIFF ON COMPUTER PARTS

Mr. Alan Redway (York East): My question is for the Minister of State for Finance. Last week the Government removed the tariff on the importation of computer parts. Will the Minister advise the House whether there were similar trade concessions given Canada by other nations and what the impact of all of this will be on our own computer industry, particularly the 3,000 workers in my constituency who work for IBM?

Hon. Barbara McDougall (Minister of State (Finance)): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the Hon. Member for his question, because the tariff elimination on both semiconductors and computer parts I think is going to enhance our trading opportunities enormously in the future. The Canadian industry is very pleased with this move. Both Japan and the United States have made similar moves. We are looking for expanded trading opportunities, which can only benefit the industry and the workers in Canada.

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INSURANCE

FOREIGN OWNERSHIP OF INSURANCE COMPANIES—INCREASE IN PREMIUMS

Mr. Alfonso Gagliano (Saint-Léonard-Anjou): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of State for Finance. Since court settlements are very high in the United States, and since 75 per cent of insurance companies operating in Canada are foreign-owned, why is the Minister allowing the insurance companies to cover their loss in the United States at the expense of the Canadian consumer by increasing policy insurance premiums?

Hon. Barbara McDougall (Minister of State (Finance)): Mr. Speaker, there is a foreign component, but there are also many domestic companies involved in this industry. As I have said in this House before, we are working on the issue of availability of insurance where we see problems. We are narrowing down the focus of the discussion to where we see the real longer term problems, and we will be dealing with solvency and capital issues of all companies operating in Canada in the near future.

Oral Questions

[Translation]

REQUEST FOR INQUIRY

Mr. Alfonso Gagliano (Saint-Léonard-Anjou): Mr. Speaker, I have a supplementary. After ten Liberal Members, now the Superintendent of Insurance Canada also wants to investigate the insurance industry. Does the Minister intend to open the books on the insurance industry so that Canadians can find out why we have this crisis situation?

[English]

Hon. Barbara McDougall (Minister of State (Finance)): Mr. Speaker, I think the concern we have expressed on behalf of the consumer and the work we have done with a number of people having problems, and with the industry, have started to bring some benefits on the consumer side where there have been real problems. The examination of the industry which we have been doing on an ongoing basis and which was part of our financial institutions discussion over the summer months and into the fall, I think has clarified a lot of the things we need to know, and we are continuing to improve in this sector.

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WELFARE

USE OF FOOD BANKS ESTABLISHED BY VOLUNTARY AGENCIES

Mr. David Orlikow (Winnipeg North): I would like to direct a question to the Minister of National Health and Welfare. Has his Department done any studies into the increasing use of food banks established by voluntary agencies which are providing meals or food baskets, helping to meet the needs of the poorest people in Canada, and whether this is due to the fact that the welfare plan established by the provinces, of which the federal Government pays 50 per cent of the cost? Why are the provinces not meeting the needs of the people?

Hon. Jake Epp (Minister of National Health and Welfare): We are well aware of the food banks and their work. That question has been asked earlier in this House. Regarding the level of welfare payments, the Member is correct in identifying that the provinces have established the levels of payment. In my own province, if he takes a look at its levels, they are not the highest in Canada. I think what he also clearly identified is that the federal Government keeps paying on a cost-sharing basis 50 per cent of the costs incurred which come under provincial jurisdiction.

WELFARE PAYMENTS IN NEW BRUNSWICK

Mr. David Orlikow (Winnipeg North): When we see that in a province like New Brunswick a single person on welfare gets \$108 a month when the poverty level is over \$9,000 a year, surely the Government of Canada should be discussing with the provinces the inadequate assistance given, rather than simply saying we will pay 50 per cent whether it meets the needs of the people or not. Would the Minister discuss this question with the provincial Ministers?