

Hon. Allan J. MacEachen (Deputy Prime Minister and President of Privy Council): Mr. Speaker, I believe that the practice of issuing such travel permits is considered in light of the security requirements of the country. I am satisfied that no such permits would be issued—

An hon. Member: A thousand a year!

Mr. MacEachen:—if the travel was in any way a threat to the security of the country.

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PUBLIC SERVICE

ACTUARIAL SOUNDNESS OF SUPERANNUATION PLAN

Mr. Jean-Robert Gauthier (Ottawa-Vanier): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the President of the Treasury Board. Bearing in mind that this House had a very useful and thorough debate yesterday on proposed amendments to public service pensions, and in spite of this we find in today's press statements such as that in the *Montreal Gazette*, "Ottawa Out by \$6 billion on Pensions", can the minister repeat his assurance to this House that such is not the case? Could he reassure public servants across Canada that indeed the public service superannuation fund will be fully actuarially sound and will not cost the taxpayers of Canada any money?

Hon. Robert K. Andras (President of the Treasury Board): Mr. Speaker, I have not had a chance to examine all those stories, but the one or two I have looked at are rather disappointing, to say the least, particularly in light of the mood expressed in the House by all parties. First of all, the suggestion that the fund is actuarially unsound is based on certain assumptions by the actuaries which I thought were thoroughly explored yesterday. There are very pessimistic assumptions about the extension of interest rates versus inflation rates, versus salary increases, versus demographic ages of retirement for 50 years in the future.

● (1142)

Indeed, on that assumption they came up with the view that there had to be front-end funding of \$5.6 billion on the indexed portion of the account. But that is an actuarial theory, an assumption. We have said from the beginning that this was to be a pay-as-you-go plan. What we are doing is to make doubly sure, by means of a three-year review, that there is no question at all down the road of any possible change which would ultimately be very detrimental to the pensioner or to the taxpayer. So I think the headlines are probably an illustration of lack of understanding of a very complex program.

An hon. Member: You had better read them.

Mr. Andras: No, I should like opposition members, who were expressing their concern about "scare" headlines yesterday, to join me when I say this does not do the country or our pensioners any service whatsoever.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Oral Questions

FINANCE

GOVERNMENT ACTION TO STABILIZE GOLD MINING INDUSTRY

Mr. Arnold Peters (Timiskaming): Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask a question of the Minister of Finance. In view of the statement made in the House yesterday by the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources that there has been a great deal of co-operation among the provincial ministers of mines and the finance ministers, and now that the price of gold on the world market has reached a level which would permit the reopening of gold mines—I am thinking particularly of areas such as northern Ontario and northern Quebec where there is high unemployment—is it the intention of the minister to assist such a process by ensuring the stability of mining practices and providing a reasonable floor price to allow for an orderly marketing program?

Hon. Jean Chrétien (Minister of Finance): I have not received any specific request regarding such a possibility. There was agreement at the first ministers' conference to hold a special meeting to make sure there is acceptable co-ordination between federal and provincial policies in terms of taxes imposed upon the mining industry. I do not know when such a meeting would be held. It is the goal of the two levels of government to stabilize the position so that we may know the basis upon which to plan the development of the industry.

Mr. Peters: Bearing in mind the fact that gold mining is a highly labour-intensive industry, and that it is located in areas which have traditionally been dependent upon it, does the minister intend to offer co-operation in the development of mining mill facilities, in conjunction with DREE, so that the use of DREE funds by mining companies employing existing mills would be possible? At the present time, this might not be provided for under the DREE program.

Mr. Chrétien: I do not know whether the legislation governing the DREE program permits the making of such grants to the mining industry. I look toward my colleague, the minister responsible, and he seems to be telling me the authority is not clear. We shall look into the matter. I think the hon. member is making a good point. In view of the price of gold at the present time, some of the gold mines might be reactivated. It is a possibility.

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THE CANADIAN ECONOMY

REPRESENTATION ON PROPOSED MONITORING AGENCY

Mr. John A. Fraser (Vancouver South): Mr. Speaker, my question is addressed to the Minister of Finance. It is supplementary to the questions asked a few minutes ago by my hon. friend. Given the fact that the Canadian Labour Congress has no representatives on the Economic Council at the moment, and given the fact that for two years now it has been government policy to establish a multipartite, national forum which would include labour, and that a subdivision of that forum