

I ask him to remember his own background, because these people could be one of his relatives. They could be from the North Shore.

At this very moment, we have 131 workers in their fifties who were machinists. We know that digital control machines are the way of the future, and that these workers will not be able to work with these new machines.

I want to ask the Prime Minister what he has to say to 131 heads of families who are going to lose their jobs. Will he just continue to ignore them as he did during my first two questions?

[English]

Hon. John C. Crosbie (Minister for International Trade): Mr. Speaker, I will once again point out that the company in question is closing its Portland, Oregon, plant, with western production being consolidated in the company's plant in Vancouver, while in the east it made a decision to continue a plant it has in Massachusetts while closing the plant in Granby.

Everyone in the House can sympathize with the 131 people who will be laid off. I personally sympathize with them, and all government programs will be available to them in securing and helping them in the transition period to other employment. Unfortunately, every year hundreds of thousands of people are laid off. They go on to obtain other jobs. In fact, the figures total several million a year.

In this particular case it is unfortunate that the company decided for economic and overhead reasons to do this, and unfortunate that the Hon. Member is attempting to twist this around for partisan political purposes.

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REGIONAL INDUSTRIAL EXPANSION

ALUMINUM SMELTER PROJECTS—DEPARTMENT'S POSITION

Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Winnipeg—Fort Garry): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Regional Industrial Expansion. Yesterday, when answering a question posed to him concerning the strong bias that was built in against the Province of Manitoba when the Prime Minister announced a guarantee for an aluminum smelter in his riding, the Minister said that the Government was prepared to provide a level playing field, equal treatment for all in order to attract investors.

On the very day that he was making that statement the Minister signed a document from his Department, an industry profile on the aluminum industry, in which he says: "The prospects of expanding ABI's Bécancour facility and of constructing a world-scale aluminum plant elsewhere in Québec are promising. Prospects for new aluminum smelters in Manitoba and British Columbia are less attractive".

Oral Questions

Is that a level playing field when his own Department signs a report designed to give direct instructions to the industry as to where and how it should be investing, and talking about one being promising and the other less attractive? Does that not give total lie and distortion to the commitment and guarantee given by the Minister, that in fact the Province of Manitoba is not being discriminated against? Is this not a clear distortion of the meaning of a level playing field?

Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, I noted that my hon. friend said in his prefatory remarks that: "The Prime Minister announced a guarantee for an aluminum industry in Quebec". That statement is false from beginning to end.

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Mulroney: I made no such statement. My statement is on the record.

What is also on the record in regard to the smelter issue is a statement from Manitoba by Peter MacGuire, Alumax's manager of corporate development. He is promoting the idea of a smelter in Manitoba and says: "I do not think it has an effect one way or the other. We were aware as a company of Sept-Iles and thought it would go ahead regardless of our decision".

These are two different projects, both of which appear to have support and value. One is more further along than the other. One is in the process of submitting a request to provincial and federal Governments. Premier Bourassa and I indicated that among the series of choices in the Province of Quebec which the private consortium was interested in, we indicated our support for Sept-Iles which has some 27 per cent unemployment and has endured very difficult and tough moments.

This in no way precludes the possibility of another group, whose spokesman says that the Sept-Iles decision has no impact on them, coming forward with plans for Manitoba which the Government of Canada, when these plans are brought forward, would look at with consideration and concern and would make sure that the same kinds of programs that were made available to Quebec or British Columbia are made available to the developers in the Province of Manitoba.

MANITOBA PROJECT—REQUEST FOR GUARANTEE OF FEDERAL ASSISTANCE

Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Winnipeg—Fort Garry): Mr. Speaker, it will come as some surprise to the people of Sept-Iles whose expectations were raised by the Prime Minister's statement, that the Prime Minister is now retracting the promise and the guarantee he gave in his own riding. If there was ever a clear example of the Prime Minister doing a flip-flop and a changeover, boy do we have it now.

Mr. Mazankowski: Tell the truth. It is time to tell the truth.