

Oral Questions

Hon. John N. Turner (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, we will be meeting Mr. Dennis McDerment and the council of the United Automobile Workers in the next few days and discussing these various matters. We are concerned not only about the health of the automobile industry but also about the health of other industries in this country which are affected by current world conditions. Of course, the answer relating to any particular sector, again, depends on how effective any remedy might be.

Mr. Broadbent: Mr. Speaker, that is the standard answer. Has the minister considered, as one of the vast range of policy alternatives which I am sure passes through the government's collective mind, the possibility of reducing—indeed, of removing—the federal sales tax on automobiles for one year on condition that the automobile companies—this would be a means of forcing them to do so—bring down the price of cars they sell to Canadians to the level at which they are sold to Americans? Thus there would be a substantial shift in sales and a greater percentage of cars would be sold on the Canadian side of the border as opposed to the American side.

Mr. Turner (Ottawa-Carleton): Mr. Speaker, that is one alternative, except that the revenue implications are quite severe. If that type of stimulus were to be introduced, it might be introduced into the economy generally.

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TRANSPORT**AUTOMOBILE PRODUCTION FACILITIES USE IN
MANUFACTURE OF URBAN TRANSIT VEHICLES**

Mr. Edward Broadbent (Oshawa-Whitby): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Transport. Has the minister's department given serious consideration to evolving a plan with the automotive sector to transfer certain productive facilities away from automobiles to the production of interurban transit vehicles, because they undoubtedly represent the way of the future?

Hon. Jean Marchand (Minister of Transport): Mr. Speaker, I have never heard of such a proposal, but I am ready to inquire and see if somebody has discussed that in the department.

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[Translation]

UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE**REQUEST THAT REGULATIONS BE AMENDED TO BENEFIT
CERTAIN AGRICULTURAL WORKERS**

Mr. Adrien Lambert (Bellechasse): Mr. Speaker, I should like to put a question to the Minister of Manpower and Immigration.

In view of the difficulties independent agricultural workers have in collecting unemployment insurance allowances because of the discrimination arising from Regulation 172-4(b) that arbitrarily sets gains at 50 per cent of the farm gross income, something that is entirely

[Mr. Broadbent.]

wrong and unfair, could the minister tell the House whether he will recommend that the regulation be amended to make it more consistent with facts and to do justice to this category of workers?

[English]

Hon. Robert K. Andras (Minister of Manpower and Immigration): Mr. Speaker, as always, I will certainly give the hon. member's representation due thought.

[Translation]

REASON FOR DELAY IN PAYING BENEFITS

Mr. André Fortin (Lotbinière): Mr. Speaker, I have a supplementary question for the Minister of Manpower and Immigration.

In view of the bewildering increase in the unemployment rate, particularly in Quebec, and the delays in the distribution of payments through the famous electronic machine of the Montreal centralized system, is the minister in a position to order that an immediate inquiry be held on the efficiency of that office, the number of payments being made and of those that cannot be made, while families waiting for the allowances are practically starving? Can the minister promise the House he will have those delays investigated and assure the House that he will take the necessary measures so that unemployment insurance claimants get the money to which they are entitled since they contributed out of their labour?

[English]

Hon. Robert K. Andras (Minister of Manpower and Immigration): Mr. Speaker, we analyse the effectiveness and speed of our services, which are very important for the reasons the hon. member has described, right across the country. According to my most recent information, the speed of the service is better than it was one year ago, which was better than it was two years ago. Notwithstanding that, if there is a local situation which is troublesome I will be glad to investigate it. I ask the hon. member to give me as much detail as possible, and I will make arrangements so that he and I can meet the chairman of the commission and look into the problem.

[Translation]

Mr. Fortin: A supplementary, Mr. Speaker.

Here is the particular point of the request I make on behalf of my colleagues and of my fellow citizens: Once everything is in order, the commission reserves itself a ten-day delay before ordering to start the payments. Is the minister aware of this situation? Does the minister have a solution to suggest to the people who will have to wait ten days, although their case is in order, to have their three meals a day at home, and does the minister intend to take steps to have the commission pay what is to be paid when the case is in order?

[English]

Mr. Andras: Mr. Speaker, I have already indicated that I will look into the situation the hon. member describes.