

Oral Questions

but it was opened anyway with \$85 million of federal loan guarantees.

It is quite reasonable, rational and fair to ask this minister: What did the government do to assure itself that the mine was not only economic but that it was safe for miners to go down into? Those miners had only governments to depend upon before they went down into that pit. What did this government do?

Hon. Tom Hockin (Minister of State (Small Businesses and Tourism)): Mr. Speaker, I can only repeat what I said yesterday. When you are a bank—

Mr. Tobin: You are not a bank; you are a politician.

Mr. Hockin:—and you put forward \$100 million you have depositors' money on the line. You are going to make sure that the mine is not going to be closed because of some explosion or that the mine is not going to be functioning because of some tragedy. So the bank made sure that the safety and health regulations—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. minister is answering a question and I am sure that members would wish him to continue.

An hon. member: No, he is not.

Mr. Speaker: He may not be giving the answer somebody wants but he is on his feet answering the question, and I know that hon. members would give him the courtesy to complete his answer.

Mr. Hockin: The first thing is that the bank wants to protect its investment and it cannot protect its investment unless it is complying with all regulations put in place by the province. Part of those regulations are health and safety. We as the federal government wanted to make sure that this was also the case so we received on a regular basis the reports from independent mining consultants—they are virtually monthly reports—to make sure this was the case. This is what the federal government should do.

We cannot supersede the provincial regime for health and safety. The provincial regime is there, but we can do what we can under our contractual arrangement with the bank to which we were giving the loan guarantee.

TRADE

Mr. Steve Butland (Sault Ste. Marie): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Deputy Prime Minister.

The Prime Minister has labelled President Bush as a father of free trade. Canadians reject the deal and the parents.

There are 70 American steel trade actions pending against numerous countries, including Canada.

• (1450)

The Canadian steel industry is depressed. Canada is a fair trader. The American share of our market has increased from 7.3 per cent to 16.3 per cent since 1988 and the free trade agreement.

Was steel on the agenda yesterday as indicated and, if so, did the Prime Minister come away with any assurances for Canadian steel producers?

Hon. William C. Winegard (Minister for Science): Mr. Speaker, we have been in constant touch with the Canadian steel industry about a supposed charge against the Canadian steel industry. We have not got that.

What the Prime Minister told Mr. Bush yesterday, one of the very important things he told Mr. Bush, was that Canada's exports to the United States today are at an all-time high thanks to the free trade agreement despite its problems.

Mr. Steve Butland (Sault Ste. Marie): Mr. Speaker, I do not believe the minister has been speaking to the steel industry; he would not get the information that he has received.

The issue will test yet again the credibility of the Prime Minister. He spoke yesterday of American trade harassment and unfairness that is hurting Canada. President Bush said: "We have agreed today to be sure that some of these disputes can be avoided".

Given the fact that these trade actions are imminent, this is a test case. Could the minister ensure us that this is a top trade priority and the Prime Minister will report to the House as soon as possible that any American trade action against Canada is off?

Hon. William C. Winegard (Minister for Science): Mr. Speaker, one of the things that the Canadian steel industry will be doing with the support of the Government of Canada if there is a dispute lodged against steel