

Oral Questions

Defence generals who chartered an Airbus to go and play golf in Florida at taxpayer's expenses? After Operation William Tell, are we having an Operation Lazyboy?

• (1500)

The Speaker: This is a long question.

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am informed that there are some. I could find out how many, although the President of the Treasury Board acknowledged not knowing any personally. I do not know any either, but I am told there are some. I got this information from the Privy Council. If I was misinformed, I will apologize, but I was told again, afterwards, that there were some.

* * *

[English]

WORKFORCE ADJUSTMENT

Mr. Chuck Strahl (Fraser Valley East, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the President of the Treasury Board. This weekend negotiations over the workforce adjustment directive failed and public servants, including those who live in Ottawa—Vanier, want to know what the government is doing about it.

Is this government afraid to finalize its position because of the byelection in Ottawa—Vanier? Why will the government not tell public servants now whether it is going to legislate changes to the workforce adjustment directive?

Hon. Arthur C. Eggleton (President of the Treasury Board and Minister responsible for Infrastructure, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I do not think the hon. member should be worrying about Ottawa—Vanier at all. I do not think it is in the cards for him to worry about it.

Long before there was to be a byelection we were talking with the unions with respect to the matter of workforce adjustment because of the number of people involved in downsizing as a result of the program review process. We will continue with those discussions. I hope to have further discussion to try to bring some resolution to the matter because the workforce adjustment directive is in the union agreement.

As I said earlier in response to the previous question, we intend to treat our employees fairly and reasonably in dealing with this matter.

* * *

SOCIAL POLICY

Hon. Jean J. Charest (Sherbrooke, PC): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Prime Minister. His government has now

brought Canadians through a major social policy consultation. We will soon have a budget in the House of Commons that promises major cuts to social policy.

The minister of human resources today said that they are targeting for more efficiency. My question to the Prime Minister is quite simple. What are the targets and priorities pursued by his government in the area of social policy?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, if the hon. leader of the Conservative Party would read the red book he would know what our priorities are in terms of social policy.

* * *

TAXATION

Mr. Nelson Riis (Kamloops, N.D.P.): Mr. Speaker, would the Minister of Finance simply say that what we read in the press today is not true, that in spite of the fact that we all appreciate there are a whole host of loopholes for the wealthiest in Canada, now we find out that the minister is going to provide one more loophole outside the parameters of the budget? Canadians who sell off assets in excess of \$600,000 in the U.S. are going to pay U.S. tax but this minister now is contemplating giving them a tax credit to make up for that.

Will the minister stand in his place and say this will not be a tax loophole that he will be introducing, although it is part of the protocol being negotiated? While he is on his feet, will he tell us what the Prime Minister is going to tell President Clinton to do about that head tax at the U.S. border?

Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance and Minister responsible for the Federal Office of Regional Development—Quebec, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, what the most recent measure does is protect the Canadian tax base on the one hand. It also makes sure that Canadians who own property abroad are not further discriminated against as a result of their Canadian citizenship compared with Americans.

What has happened is a very good measure that protects not only the Canadian tax base but Canadians. I am sure the member would agree that is worthwhile.

In terms of what the Prime Minister should tell President Clinton, it is really an absurd idea that the Americans at the time of NAFTA and the current times of exchange of trade would put on some kind of crossing border tax. It is simply absurd. It is an idea to which this government takes great exception.

I know that I speak for the minister of trade, although I also would say that it is sometimes very difficult to speak for the minister of trade.